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Anna Witeska-Młynarczyk

Evoking Polish Memory

State, Self and the Communist Past in Transition

PETER LANG
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Edited by Dariusz Stola / Machteld Venken

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An unveiling of a monument to an underground soldier near Marianowice
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For Marcin, Jurik, and Lena

oraz moim rodzicom

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Preface

The place where memory and history meet is always imbued with ambiguity. Multiple understandings and images of the past co-exist and compete for space and legitimacy. Collectively, they generate images and accounts that are both layered and blurred. Sometimes, like two separate but contiguous registers which both account for and contest time past, memories and histories may be formed, reformed and transmitted from standpoints so different that it is hard to recognize in them the same reality, or the same epoch or even incident. Eastern Central Europe is a prime example of such a palimpsest of memory, where the traces are so entangled and so hazy that it is difficult to follow a single thread from beginning to end. And within Eastern Central Europe, Poland - positioned between the historical giants of Russia and Prussia/Germany - has one of the most tangled geo-political narratives.

The Germans ended their occupation of Poland in 1945, fleeing west as the Soviet army marched forward from the east. A kind of civil war, between the Polish Home Army (AK), the Red Army and various left and right wing groups of Polish and Ukrainian partisans, continued until 1947, when the Polish People's Republic was established. But in some regions, including the place about which Anna Witeska-Młynarczyk is writing, the unofficial war carried on for several more years, and is still today etched deeply into local memory. These are contested memories, which divide families, friends and neighbours. During the communist years, many stories were ostensibly hidden and silenced, but festered below the surface, feeding feelings of sorrow, rage and resentment. Others were brought into the public domain, manipulated, re-told and reshaped through the courts and public transcripts, re-lived through periods of imprisonment and exile. Meanwhile, the socialist state was creating its own security systems, and the secret police took on the task of surveillance and regulation. Almost half a century later, when socialism collapsed throughout the eastern bloc, we witnessed the same processes, but from a reversed perspective. It is striking that even when ideologies and the structures which support them change dramatically, the same practices continue under different names.

This book is about memory in transition. The transition is, most obviously, one located in political time – the transition period after the fall of communism in 1989. But Anna Witeska-Młynarczyk is going far beyond the obvious in this monograph, and as we read on we find that the transition is also an older one, from war-torn Poland to the socialist state, and that it is perhaps most importantly a personal one, as heroes become villains with regime changes, villains are rediscovered, and discover themselves, as heroes, and former victims very quickly

become victors. The material she presents draws on popular history, archives, court materials and personal testimony. It probes the memories, often very moving and often problematic, and the recalled histories, of a range of old men who were, in their youth and middle age, variously nationalist fighters, prisoners and deportees, and members of the security forces of the socialist state. Each has a powerful narrative, imbued with a strong sense of self-righteousness. At the time of Witeska-Młynarczyk's research, the ones who had been the 'victims' of socialism were well placed to become the 'heroes' of the postsocialist state; the ones who had been the security guards of socialism, on the other hand, after years of serving the regime in power, suddenly found themselves excluded from spaces of legitimate authority, and portrayed as criminals and villains. To encompass and interpret such accounts, the lineal notion of transition has to expand and broaden to include personal transitions, often unexpected, as well as sudden shifts and about-turns in memory and history.

Reading this book, I was struck by a memory of a conversation I had with a young man in the former GDR, about 10 years after the *Wende*, the fall of the wall. He has been in his late teens in 1989, and was doing his military service. Posted on the east-west border, as a border guard, he described to me his confusion when he was suddenly told that the border was now open and that the West German soldiers who had been his enemies all his life were now his allies and friends. As AlexeiYurchak says, "everything was forever, until it was no more" (Yurchak 2005). Socialism had seemed absolute, permanent and, indeed, forever to most citizens of socialist states. For those who either through belief or opportunism, or just resignation, cast their lot with the socialist state, it appeared to be unassailable; for those others who publically or, more commonly, secretly, challenged it, it was a massively oppressive structure which gave little indication of immanent demise. For members of both camps, because it seemed 'forever', it was a socio-political world which had to be lived in, compromised with and negotiated on a daily basis.

Most ordinary people were ambivalent about politics and saw clearly the ambiguities inherent in the combination of a socialist ideology and life practices that bore little resemblance to the ideal. These ambiguities and ambivalences have been the subject of a lot of very good anthropological research and reflections. But there is a more complex side to them, which until this work has not really been addressed. This concerns the shifting identities of the heroes and the villains, and the victims – who were they, which was which and at what points in history, and how are we to understand them?

I first met Anna Witeska-Młynarczyk when she was an MA student at CEU, and a colleague sent me a copy of her dissertation, which touched on questions close to my own work. This piece of work showed unusual promise; it was

based on interview material with one woman, in her late middle age, who was remembering and commenting on the death of her child. It was a challenging project, and one carried out with a gentleness that was nonetheless uncompromising. It struck me then as a very brave undertaking. Over the years I came to know Anna well; she was an invaluable research assistant and colleague on a research project I carried out in Poland. Later I watched the progress of her own doctoral research with great interest. It is a great pleasure to read this book, the culmination of an apprenticeship journey which began with the MA project on death, grief and memory, and to see that the early promise which I and my colleagues recognized has been realized.

The book is a remarkable achievement. One of the most difficult tasks facing an ethnographer is that of establishing rapport with interlocutors with whom it is difficult to sympathise or empathise. Based on hours of interviews, Anna Witeska-Młynarczyk brings to life the memories of these old men, their very troubled and conflicted pasts, and their own interior worlds, in which they reflect on and justify their past acts. This is delicate and subtle interviewing, allowing the subjects to speak and to wander freely through their memory archives, but pushing and probing the murkier areas; Witeska-Młynarczyk is not afraid to ask the most difficult questions. The result is a rare look into worlds which many would consider unsavoury, that sheds light on issues of power, violence and persecution by no means restricted to the Eastern European socialist period. In fact, as we should know from old and recent history, these issues are geographically and politically almost ubiquitous. More than anything, this material and analysis speaks to Hannah Arendt's reflection on the banality of evil (Arendt 1963). We need research like this, and books like this one, if we are ever going to be able to answer the question, so often asked after critical and traumatic events of the last decades, of "How could they have done this? How could this have happened?".

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Frances Pine August 2013

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Notes on Transcription

…	A silence, pause
[…]	Omitted parts of the speech
CAPITALS	Loud speech
(I thought)	Speech that overlaps with that of another speaker, a simultaneous speech, for instance A: It was really dangerous (to work there) B: (You should have) seen us at that 'job'.
italics	Emotionally loaded utterances
-	An interrupted utterance, for instance A: Did you- B: I thought that he- A: I asked whether you did…
[His fingers tapping on the table]	My comments
[.]	Inaudible material

Introduction

Landscapes of Polish memory

This book is about landscapes of memory, as they have been collectively realized in a historical time of one Polish town - Marianowice[1] - by some of its inhabitants. Marianowice's landscape and the memories held by the people who live in it convey a sense of altered and ruptured history subject to numerous reconstructions. Conflicting commemorative inscriptions pile up on the buildings in which people's thoughts manage to make sense of the seemingly contradictory. The historical period I focus on encompasses WWII, its aftermath, the communist era, and the transition from communism to democracy, suggesting an association with Howard Hodgkin's paintings in which layers are painted over layers, never fully erased, always unveiling seemingly forgotten details of past social situations. The subject of this manuscript concerns the recent collective efforts to conventionalize and disambiguate the complex communist past undertaken in Poland, particularly during the years of my fieldwork, from 2006 to 2008. The complexity of the collective appropriation of historical process is visible in many corners of the town, in the ways in which people move within it or in narratives passed on in the locality. In line with Siobhan Kattago's (2013) view of memory and representation of the past in contemporary Europe, my ethnographic case shows Poland as a space where a plurality of memories and narratives about the recent past start to branch out. The painting of new layers in the landscape and in the people's minds is a political process comprising collectively enacted efforts by variously aligned social actors differently positioned vis-à-vis the centres of power and holding to divergent narratives about the past. This work takes as its subject matter political processes in which new collectively-built frameworks became objectified and legitimized through institutionalized state channels, eventually proving consequential for the psychologies of two different groups of people, as well as bringing visible change to the landscapes in which they live. The described policies are not characterized by stability as, like society at large, the political elites in Poland are divided on the question of what to do with the legacy of communism.

1 Marianowice is an invented name given to real places – a Polish town of approximately 400.000 inhabitants and the surrounding areas. I chose to anonymize the area and the people. The historical sources used in the book are also anonymized so as not to reveal the identities. I explain the reasoning behind this decision later on in the introduction.

The years of the communist regime in Poland were abundant in violent transgressions of varying intensity, directed particularly at those who politically opposed the pro-Soviet establishment. The structure of the security police[2] was created in order to immobilize those who imagined that the state in which they lived should have been different and who stood up for this belief. The methods used by the security forces involved harsh repressions, both physical and psychological. During the Stalinist period, the security forces used brutal methods of elimination, imprisonment, torture and psychological repression. From the 1960s onwards, the invigilation of Polish society became more discreet; yet, with every social upheaval, the communist party tightened its control and often used violence against crowds and individuals. Eventually, in the winter of 1981, the newly-imposed martial law turned the social life of the country into a military-controlled project that lasted nearly 20 months. The changes in the global political order, the emergence of *Solidarity,* and the gradual dissolution of the Soviet bloc paved the way for the processes of political reconstruction. In 1989, the communist party leaders, the *Solidarity* activists and members of the Catholic Church sat around a table to agree on a new direction for the nation. It was the first step towards a social and political transition[3].

This research, conducted nearly two decades after the collapse of a violent regime, was designed to explore the current perspectives of two groups: those who performed acts of resistance during communism, and who are now involved in the moral modes of defining the past, present and their own position in the framework of national history; and those who worked in the communist apparatus of repression, and who have been undergoing symbolic processes of exclusion in post-communist Poland[4]. I wanted to examine the ways in which the individuals portrayed in this book came to interpret the recent past. One can appreciate that these subjects and their involvement in the collectively realized actions are oriented to achieving coherence in their life-worlds, unavoidably nest-

2 For the state of historical research and interesting references to works devoted to the communist apparatus of repression in Poland see F. Musiał (2006).

3 For a more detailed account of the history of the People's Republic of Poland (Polska Republika Ludowa, PRL), see for example D. Stola, M. Zaremba (eds) "PRL – trwanie i zmiana" (2003); interesting and thorough analyses of the social and political aspects of the transition from communism towards democracy in Poland can be found, for example, in: P. Śpiewak "Pamięć po komunizmie" (2005), J. Staniszkis "Post-communism: the emerging enigma" (1999) or "Postkomunizm: próba opisu" (2001).

4 Among my informants there were people who worked for the Internal Security Corps (Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego, KBW), the Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa, UB changed in 1956 into Służba Bezpieczeństwa, SB) and a state police institution (Milicja Obywatelska, MO).

ed in the local landscape configuration that relies on the shifting power structures, semiotic and material resources, and individual psychologies. When designing the research, I believed that working with both groups, defined by the actions of the current state as heroes/victims[5] and perpetrators, would allow the emergence of a more complete account of the symbolic and moral transition of a nation composed of various individual dramas. People who stood unevenly on different sides of the barricade in the past have been subjected to the moral practices of affirmation and denial in today's polity. I view their fates as necessarily entangled and complementary, even if conflicting. If, while analyzing the acknowledged lives, one simultaneously looks into the denied ones, the picture gains more depth. One is able to see a background and a foreground at the same time, a perspective that is so easily abandoned, especially when the framing has a moral overtone. In this manuscript, I look at the consequences of the changing projects, authored by the Polish elites, of settling accounts with the past, which oscillated between extremes, and argue that the lack of clear and consequential historical policy led to the unpacking of troublesome individual memories while never fully incorporating them into the symbolic sphere. Such a situation brings no solid resolution, and it may distort the process of building a stable narrative about the self, one's past, and its relevance for the wider community.

Setting and methods

The first part of the book speaks about the heroes/victims. I use this term to denote those who were involved in anti-communist activity, and who were repressed for such engagements during the undemocratic regime; they have since experienced official recognition in post-communist Poland as victims of communism and have at the same time been publicly acknowledged as national heroes. Suffering and heroism is a well-grounded topos in Polish culture. Those who experienced repression during communism are publicly acknowledged as victims and are seen as people whose dignity and integrity was violated in the political context. At the same time, since they resisted and suffered in the name of the nation, their deeds are considered heroic and they are represented as indomitable heroes. A large number of people in Marianowice fall into this category. Thousands are members of various associations of victims, veterans, combatants and former *Solidarity* activists. In order to ground my work, I chose to work closely with one particular association – the Association of the Former Prisoners of the Communist Period in Marianowice. The first five chapters should be read as a consequence of my engagement in the workings of this asso-

5 I explain why I use name hero/victim later on in the chapter.

ciation. I visited the associational office on a weekly basis. I participated in the rituals and commemorative events with them. I read the files collected by the state security authorities concerning certain subgroups and persons in the association. Eventually, I undertook some more in-depth work with eighteen individuals. These were mostly men repressed during the Stalinist period. For my methodology, I relied on participant observation, recordings of naturally occurring conversations, recordings of commemorative events, written assignments, interviews, historical records and other official documents made available to me in the course of interaction with my informants and used as contextual material for understanding their stories.

The second part of this study is concerned with the former officers employed in the communist apparatus of repression[6]. I managed to work extensively with a generation of functionaries who worked in the state security authorities in the 1960s. I also reached a few individuals who worked for the regime at its outset. I used a snowball technique to gain access to this category of informants. I conducted in-depth interviews with eight officers of the Ministry of Interior Affairs. The most far-reaching material I gathered concerns an officer accused of committing a *communist crime*, and who underwent a trial during my fieldwork. I used the trial situation to gain a dual victim-perpetrator perspective on this particular case. I interviewed a couple of witnesses on both sides, and I also worked closely with the defendant and with the main prosecution witness. I attended most of the hearings. The trial allowed me to gain access to the group of heroes/victims who belonged to *Solidarity*, and who were repressed in the 1980s. Apart from the trial, my work with the former security officers focused on eliciting their life narratives and probing, through conversation, various topics connected to the past and to the present.

This work attempts to give a sense of the ways in which these two differently positioned groups of people belonging to the same nation/state - the former anti-communist activists repressed for their political involvements and the former officers of the state security authorities - try collectively and internally to negotiate a sense of justice and keep a coherent image of the communist past in the circumstances of the revival of memory politics and attempts to account for

6 I use here various names when talking about the communist apparatus of repression, i.e. forces used under the Polish communist state for fighting the widely understood opposition and for pacifying society (Musiał 2006:7). Historians disagree about how to name such an apparatus. Some argue that "security apparatus" is a proper name, while some prefer "apparatus of repression" or "apparatus of terror" (see Musiał 2006:8). Refraining from evaluation, I will use names such as the state security forces or authorities, the apparatus of repression, the secret police, the security apparatus or security officers interchangeably.

past crimes in contemporary Poland. Above all, the dual construction was meant to allow space for the illustration of divergent perspectives and affective reactions to socially conditioned situatedness vis-à-vis one's past. The position of each of these groups is different. One used to be on the recognized and privileged side of the state pantheon but, with the transition, moved into the sphere of excluded subjects; the other used to be repressed but is now gaining a momentum of recognition and affirmation[7].

I conducted the research mainly among men. While, among the heroes/victims, I met and interviewed women informants, among the former security officers I worked exclusively with male informants. This book should hence be read as an ethnography of particular experiences of manhood nested in nationalist and communist ideologies and realized in the milieu of specific social groups and their complex histories. Recent scholarship has explored the idea that memory is gendered, meaning that there are differences between the ways in which women and men remember the past (Leydesdorff, Passerini and Thomson 2009:1). The socio-linguistic approach, for instance, reveals differences at the level of speech, i.e. it tracks the differences in usage of grammatical constructions in personal narratives, arguing that women and men construct the stories about the same past differently (Ely and McCabe 2009). These differences are believed to be caused by differences in the life experiences of men and women, taking on different social roles and functioning in divergent social contexts and settings, e.g. the tendencies of men to dominate public life and of women to focus on family and household (Leydesdorff, Passerini and Thomson 2009:1). My informants, especially the members of the Association, belong to generations in which male and female spheres remain well defined and separated. I noticed this during visits to the heroes/victims' homes, where I was greeted by their wives who served us with tea and cookies but never sat together with us while I was recording. In the case of the former security officers, the wives would be 'protected' from any knowledge about their professional duties. This was exemplified by Janek who, during my fieldwork, underwent a trial, having been accused

7 As will become apparent later, the picture is a bit more complex. The communist state and its functionaries were not unambiguously condemned and excluded in the post-communist condition. This is a large group of people and a lot of dividing lines cut through it. E.g., the ex-functionaries of the security apparatus feel betrayed by the communist leaders. On the other hand, the recognition for the heroes/victims feels bittersweet because of the economic prosperity of the nomenklatura in today's Poland, especially when compared to the economic hardship experienced by many of the heroes/victims. Hence, despite occupying their own pantheon, the heroes/victims do not particularly feel like winners.

of a communist crime, and did not share this experience with his wife. 'I simply do not talk to her about it' - he told me.

I often asked myself what I might have discovered had I approached this project from an alternative viewpoint - that of women. Time did not allow me to explore both viewpoints sufficiently. The logic of ethnographic research implies constant decision-making about what to follow and what to ignore (Sanjek 2003:299). My choice was to follow men, rather than women, because this is what fitted my research timeframe and the way in which the interactions with my informants unfolded. While an ethnography of female, middle-ranking officers, for example, would have made for a fascinating journey, I did not reach a single woman via the snowball effect technique I used. Within the Association of the heroes/victims, women were present, yet their world was self-contained and lived backstage, compared to the front of the stage occupied by the men. The *embodiment of gender* was nonetheless visible in the usage of associational space where women often clustered around a tiny pantry serving tea or coffee, preparing food for an occasion, talking mainly to each other, and never really taking part in loud male exchanges on recent politics or history. They hardly ever wore uniforms or carried standards during official rituals, although they were always there to help with a glass of water. They wrote poems from their past experience rather than autobiographical narratives, they ran the associational newsletter, and they were usually more modest than the men about their deeds and accomplishments.

Thinking about gender and memory, Sherna Berger Gluck warns researchers against collecting gendered stories 'naively on a sense of gender solidarity' (cited after Leydesdorff: IX). Gender is no longer treated as a hegemonic category; it is seen as flexible and changeable. 'Masculinity and femininity take different forms in different cultural settings' (Leydesdorff, Passerini and Thomson 2009:1), and within each gender there is great variety, allowing the display of gendered identities (Leydesdorff, Passerini and Thomson 2009:2). This ethnography describes two groups of men whose different positions enable each of them to remember the past and experience their manhood while evoking that past in the present. In the context of memory politics, their gendered identities gained another dimension in which they were performed and produced. The masculinity of these men became partially defined in a public sphere and exposed vis-à-vis particular audiences (e.g. in an official commemorative ritual or in a court). Catherine Kohler Riessman notes how 'respondents narrativize particular experiences in their lives, often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society' (1993:3). The men with whom I worked in this project, who have taken up new social positions as a result of the political transition, were preoccupied in their narratives with piecing together the ideal, the re-

al, and the self-demanded or socially-imposed. A hero/victim publicly depicted as a brave and honourable soldier with no stains or shadows has to find ways of incorporating more ambiguous experiences of being a man who 'did not manage to be adamant at all times' (see chapter five). Walking with standards and receiving medals and military promotions, he has to work out a selective narrative that favours those memories that prove he was a man, a role he performs in a public square. The second-generation security officers, on the other hand, try in their narratives to rescue the sense of masculinity that had been fed by the 'bureaucracy of terror' in the past. For them, being a man meant having flair, being cunning, being able to stomach brutality, being professional, and being powerful. They take a defensive stand, realizing that these attitudes are now socially condemned. As will become apparent from the narratives, the political transition irritated the gendered aspect of the identities of both groups of men.

The manuscript attempts to pin down the notion of memory on various levels of social reality - from legal aspects of the memory project to embodied experience of remembering. It views memory as a multidimensional figure the depth of which is given by social configurations of power, collective objectifying practices, diversity of historically established cultural vehicles, and individual life histories backed up by fantasies, fears and desires. The main aim of this research was to understand ways in which people negotiate and incorporate a hero/victim and a perpetrator identity into their self-schemata and how this influences their psychologies. The plural form of the noun 'landscape' in the title of the introduction is intended to signal the plurality of embodied interactive practices of memory, and their conflicting characters.

Since the book is part of a historical series, I wish to devote some space to explaining the philosophy of anthropological research and the reasons for anonymizing the sources and the people. A historian may feel troubled by the question of how to verify the arguments and knowledge presented in this text if the sources are not given. It is hoped that the commentary on the nature of anthropological work and a specific case, in particular the explanation of its ethical dimension, will facilitate the evaluation of this work and help the reader to approach it with openness.

For anthropologists, it is the fieldwork experience that makes the research 'anthropological' (Amit 2000: 1). Unlike methods used in other disciplines, going into the field is understood as a social experience and a 'total experience' (Amit 2000: 1). Its shape depends on the 'conceptual, professional, financial and relational opportunities and resources accessible to the ethnographer' who engages his/her intellectual, physical, emotional, political and intuitive capital to learn about cultural worlds of particular people (Amit 2000: 6, 1). As such, the fieldwork experience is characterized by instability. Anthropological research is

called a 'messy qualitative experience' because of its dynamism and unpredictability. This kind of research implies a constant shifting of position between people, social situations, identities and perspectives. In fact, the circumstances often define the choices and method rather than *vice versa* (Amit 2000: 11). A wide range of methodological techniques can be integrated in ethnographic research (e.g. use of empathy, casual conversations, interviews, life histories, recording of collective expressions of local cultures such as myths, songs or rituals etc.). The choice depends on the appropriateness of a particular technique for the studied topic, the practical possibility of applying it in the field, and the theoretical views of the researcher (Salzman 2002:549). Michael Carrithers points out that fieldwork 'may take as many forms as there are anthropologists, projects and circumstances' (2002: 350). Ethnographic research is about the ways in which 'a series of unplanned encounters' make the ethnographer understand the people he/she is studying (Bradburd 1998: XVI). The ethnographer's paramount aim is 'to listen, and to move as quickly as possible into natural settings of social life, the places people would be, doing what they would be doing, if the ethnographer was not there' (Sanjek 2000: 299). This approach grants openness and flexibility to what ends up as a very individualistic and interactive research process. Its strength lies in the ethnographer's ability to 'respond and adapt to social circumstances as these arise, to be open to a wide variety of different types of relationships and interactions' (Amit 2000: 10). The main qualification ascribed to a good ethnographer is his/her capacity to imaginatively enter into other people's lives (Carrithers 2002: 351). As Peter Metcalf puts it, 'it remains the case that anthropologists get out and around the world in ways that other scholars do not' (2005: 183). As a consequence, many contemporary anthropologists 'prefer to avoid claims of practicing science' (Metcalf 2005: 183). In a humanistic vision of conducting anthropology, which I share, the goal is emphatically to grasp the studied people's way of thinking, to create a qualitative account that reflects both the researcher and those studied, while the ethnography itself remains one of many possible interpretations (Salzman 2002:552).

Naturally, there emerges the question of how to assess the accuracy of the material presented in such ethnography. Discussions about methodology are not very 'popular' among anthropologists (Salzman 2002:552). Nevertheless, a toolkit is available to help us discuss the validity of an ethnographic representation. Firstly, Roger Sanjek suggests that ethnographers should be 'honest about their role and sponsorship' (2002:299). This will give the research a certain transparency and explain some of the choices made by the researcher. Further, he talks about theoretical openness, i.e. the openness with which the ethnographer discusses theory, explicitly depicts his/her fieldwork path (e.g. number of informants, type of relationships developed during fieldwork, ways of gathering

data), and provides information about the fieldwork evidence itself, i.e. remains clear about relationships of note and records for the final text (Sanjek 2002:302). Similarly, Daniel Bradburd suggests that the way to achieve validity is to 'show how being there creates ethnographic understanding'. He proposes that the ethnographer should expose the sources he/she used in order to understand the studied people (1998: XVII). Michael Angronsino expresses similar but more developed suggestions that may be helpful in evaluating anthropological works: 1/ evaluate how conclusions relate to the gathered material; 2/ look at the coherence of the research process (i.e. how long did the researcher spend in the field, what methods did he/she use, were they properly chosen etc.?); 3/ access its internal accuracy - to what extent does the argument seem reasonable?; 4/ access its external accuracy - can the research be used in a comparative framework?; 5/ assess whether the author openly discusses the research ethics. Another helpful technique mentioned by Angronsino for making the research more credible is triangulation, i.e. usage of diverse methodologies in the course of inquiry (2010: 116-117). Wishing to give the reader an opportunity to evaluate this work on anthropological terms, I openly discuss methodology, theory and my own positionality. I also try to show in each chapter how the theory that inspired me maintains a dialogue with the empirical findings. Last, but not least, I discuss the difficult ethical dimension of this work.

Since ethnographic research implies the development of close relationships between the researcher and the researched subjects, the emphasis on the ethical dimension of research remains central for anthropologists. For this research, I was guided by the ethical guidance of the European Anthropological Association and the Ethics Commission at University College London, where this project was carried out. The research was developed in accordance with the Data Protection Act binding in the UK. The Act aims to protect human research subjects against abuses (Angronsino 2010: 161). According to *the Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice* prepared by the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth, an ethnographer is obliged to respect and protect the research participants from harm. Such protection implies the following: protecting the physical, social and psychological wellbeing of the participants; respecting their rights, interests, sensitivities and privacy; anticipating harm and protecting the research participants against any potentially harmful effects of the research. This obliges anthropologists to be aware of the intrusive potential of some of their enquiries and methods and to negotiate informed consent and leave open the right to confidentiality and anonymity.

Among the people who entrusted me with their thoughts during the research process, I met many who were concerned about revealing their identity and making their thoughts publicly available in the form of an academic manuscript.

I used consent forms before each interview, allowing the interviewee to decide whether his identity would be revealed or not. I informed each person about the aim and content of the research and the possible consequences of participating in it. I also made it clear that each person was free to end the research relationship at any time without giving a reason, or to change his/her decision about the use of their name or narrative before the field research was completed. Among the ex-functionaries of the security apparatus, only one person felt comfortable about the use of his name. A few of the heroes/victims did not wish the research to reveal their identities, but the majority wanted the research to show both their personal details and 'the truth'. Because the stories of those who consented to the disclosure of their identities overlap, intersect and feed into the narratives of those who did not, and because both groups are often linked by the same events and documents, I decided that, in order to comply with the ethical guidelines, the best solution was to anonymize everything - personal details, place names and catalogue numbers of historical records used in the text. This decision was a natural consequence of my professional commitment to the anthropological ethical code and my overriding aim of protecting the people with whom I worked. As an anthropologist, I consider the interests of the research participants a priority.

Readers may feel that anonymity removes any possibility of verifying my arguments. It is worth keeping in mind that, had I not anonymized my sources, I would not have been able to produce the most interesting parts of this work. Even today, people in Poland need a guarantee of confidentiality, a comfortable trust zone in which to expose their hesitations and versions of the communist past. Later in the text, I try to explain why each group feels insecure talking about the past in non-conventionalized ways, i.e. how their fears are conditioned. The history of the People's Republic of Poland and the memories of it have been fairly well researched in sociological and historical terms as well as from the perspective of political science. An ethnographic study focusing on subjectivity and ways in which individual and social regimes of memory interact opens up new possibilities for understanding what is actually happening when historical policy is being implemented. I hope that my narrative will open up a space for a new discussion and that it will bring human beings to the forefront of the debate about memory politics.

To facilitate the verification of my theses in non-anthropological terms, I have made available excerpts from field notes, recordings of interviews and public events, catalogue numbers of the files used but anonymized in the book, and some of the visual material used for analysis by handing them into the Archives

of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw[8]. The research material is ordered by chapters - as it was used for supporting the arguments developed in each section. It can be accessed by members of academia on condition that no identities and personal details included in the package are given away.

Anthropology of the end

This ethnography draws upon John Borneman's project of an 'anthropology of the end in political authority' (2004), as it focuses on the historical moment of social reconfigurations in the Polish modes of self-representation after a specific authoritarian regime had been brought to an end. The collapse of communism in Poland should be regarded as a local element of a larger process of dissolution of the Cold War system expressed through the dismantling of authoritative right-wing and left-wing regimes and the assimilation of a democratic and more humanistic political agenda. The emergence of the post-Cold War era judicial solutions, described by Bernard Schlink as a period of 'revolutionary justice', constituted a larger transcontinental process (cited after Borneman 1997:7; compare Mink, Neumayer 2013). Such political transformations imply the necessity of dealing with the wicked aspects of the collapsed state forms. Different localities and communities implemented various solutions for representing the violent past and accounting for it. The implemented solutions have been largely dependent on political culture, configurations of power, various groups' entitlement to power, and their access to institutionalized tools of state control through which the politics of memory are shaped. Ethnographies from around the world give examples of ways in which various societies have moved from undemocratic regimes to more democratic political forms (e.g. Amadiume et al. 2000; Barnouw 2005; Bucur 2009; Pine, Kaneff, Haukanes 2004; Ross 2001; Skultans 2001; Smith 2009; Stern 2006; Wilson 2000).

In all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where the political transformation occurred, a public discussion on the communist legacy surfaced and some forms of transitional justice were adapted. Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer note that 'in all European countries the numbers of legally and normatively framed "memory politics" are increasing' (2013: 25). They indicate that the general tendency has involved de-communization of state bureaucracy and edu-

8 http://www.petea.home.pl/apan/; the file can be found under the reference number *księga nabytków 2694* . The material given to the archive is ordered by chapters; thus, interested academics can go straight to the recordings, photos or field notes supporting the arguments presented in particular chapters, but not to specific fragments. The interview files bear the same names as the people in the book.

cating young people about the evil deeds of Communism (2013:28). On the institutional side[9], a variety of methods and instruments were used by the state authorities in East-Central Europe with the aim of settling the accounts with the communist past. According to Carlos Closa Montero, the adopted solutions should be understood as a specific combination of legal instruments and policies that differ from country to country. This variance reflects 'different historical legacies brought into the democratic transformation by each society' (Tyszka 2010:305). Stanisław Tyszka perceives the law as a very potent instrument used for (re)shaping collective memories. In his view, legality in the post-communist space turned into 'a battleground for different visions of the past' in which various actors comprising the nascent civic society took part (Tyszka 2010:306). Montero analyzed various dimensions of settling the accounts with the totalitarian and repressive regimes of the 20th century in the EU member states. He identified a few areas of memory politics that served him as bases for comparison between the studied countries, such as 'justice for victims', 'justice for perpetrators' or 'fact finding/truth seeking'. According to him, after 1989, it was a common feature of the ECE countries to constitute laws symbolically condemning the collapsed repressive regimes (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) (Closa Montero 2008:21-25). Equally, the element of the memory politics dealing with 'justice for victims' (i.e. policies of rehabilitation, reparation and restitution), maintains Montero, was a popular and fairly uncontroversial instrument used for dealing with the past in the examined countries. Similarly, 'the memory and awareness initiatives' were and continue to be a widespread element of memory politics. Another component of the transitional justice mentioned by him is the 'fact finding/truth seeking', involving the establishment of official commissions, the setting up of disclosure mechanisms and/or opening and regulating access to secret files. Institutional bodies with the specific aim of dealing with transitional justice were created *inter alia* in the following countries: Czech Republic (Office for the Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism, which collects and discloses information about the criminal and repressive aspects of the regime, and the Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, which secures, analyzes, and makes available to the public secret documents produced by the totalitarian regimes); Latvia (Center for the Documentation of the Consequences of Totalitarianism, which collects and analyzes the secret files, informs the Of-

9 Apart from the institutional structures, Mink and Neumayer mention the importance of the level of social relations for the memory politics. These imply 'citizen interactions (victim associations), unregulated actions (organized leaks of lists of persons who collaborated with the political police), expert communities and their scientific studies, and interference in the historical field from journalist, judge and MP 'intruders' (2013:28).

fice of the State Prosecutor about the criminal acts and supports the process of rehabilitation of repressed persons); Lithuania (The Genocide Research Centre of Lithuania, which investigates instances of genocide, crimes against humanity, and acts of resistance to Nazi and Soviet occupations); Romania (National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, which manages and makes available to the public the files gathered by the Securitate and takes part in the lustration procedures, and the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania, which studies acts of communist repression and crimes); Slovakia (Nation's Memory Institute, which researches the period of fascist and communist repression, helps prosecute the perpetrators, discloses information to the public and educates). In relation to 'justice for perpetrators', Montero identifies three different solutions: war crimes trials, trials on different grounds, and measures such as purges, lustration laws, and disclosure of identity of perpetrators; again, he notes that each country has adapted a different solution (Montero 2008:7-9).

As Natalia Letki in her work on lustration in East-Central Europe argues, 'the actual numbers of people affected by lustration do not support the vision of 'a spectre of purging haunting East-Central Europe' (2002:539). In a majority of countries, e.g. Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania, de-communisation in the form of lustration (i.e. 'screening for those holding top state or communist party positions and working for the secret service') was narrowed down to secret service employees and their collaborators, leaving the communist party members intact. From among the ECE countries, Germany and the Czech Republic implemented the most extensive and immediate screening policies (539).

In the public debate on the legacy of communism in Poland, the German example of dealing with the communist past is often brought up as a model for comparison. Paweł Śpiewak describes Germany as a country where the presence of political will enabled the implementation of lustration, disclosure of files and the preparation of a comprehensive report about the legacy of communism in the GDR. Meanwhile, he concludes, in Poland there was insufficient political will for an open discussion of the legacy of communism (Śpiewak 2005:158-160). According to Dudek, Germany was most successful in dealing with the undemocratic past and did so in the quickest way (Dudek 2011:26). In Germany, the public staging of citizens' voices was much more clearly orchestrated than in other countries (apart from Bulgaria), since it was the people who literally stopped the destruction of the files in 1990 and pressed for the implementation of legal solutions that would make them public (Dudek 2011:27). Eventually, in

1991, a special body[10] took over the archive and became responsible for making the files accessible, conducting historical research based on these records, and educating the public about the communist past. However, it is worth noting, after Anselma Gallinat, that the clear line of the German post-unification government in promoting the policy of re-working the SED-dictatorship was coupled with the phenomenon of nostalgia for the communist past characterizing popular memory (2008). Similarly, David Clarke and Ute Wölfel argue that the question of how the German Democratic Republic should be remembered is still 'hot' (3) and far from being settled. The issue of how successful this particular project of settling the accounts with the past has been remains complex and seems particularly difficult to estimate.

In the neighbouring Czech Republic, the Lustration Act was passed in 1991; it aimed at identifying the secret collaborators, the officers of the secret police and the communist party members among those people aspiring to public office. In 1996, the Czech Parliament passed an Act that allowed very narrow access to the files produced by the secret police. In 1997, the newly-created Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (*Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů*) took over the security archive. Like the German model, the Institute started to function as a research and educational centre. Access to the files in the Czech Republic is completely open (Dudek 2011:30-31). In Slovakia, in contrast, lustration did not take place. The files are accessible to historians and journalists through the Nation's Memory Institute but no personal details appear in them (Dudek 2011:32). Tomas Sniegon argues that the emergence of the new institutes in Prague and Bratislava, inspired by the German and Polish models, was originally explained in moral and scientific terms; however, both bodies turned into 'ideological tools of the new governing post-Communist elites that served to centralize control of the collective "national" memory' (2013:97). Again, the question of what is effective as a policy of transitional justice arises.

Evaluating the lustration processes in ECE countries, Letki considers Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland as those countries with 'sufficient'

10 ‚The agency of the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi records (BStU) stores and administers in its archives the records of the Ministry for State Security ("MfS" as its acronym or colloquially termed "Stasi") of the former German Democratic Republic that were secured after the peaceful revolution of 1990. It encompasses a total of around 111 kilometres (about 50 miles) of documents and 1.4 million photos. Based on the provisions defined in the Stasi Records Act (StUG), the BStU allows access to these files to private citizens, institutions and the public'; (from http://www.bstu.bund.de/EN/Home/home_node.html (03.03.2013).

lustration[11], while Slovakia, Bulgaria and Albania are considered to have achieved 'insufficient' lustration due to non-implementation, the narrow scope of the screening and the manipulative character of the adopted policies. Letki, who undertook comparative studies, points out that the lustration processes that have occurred throughout East-Central Europe share certain characteristics despite their socio-political specificity: 1/ the shape of the lustration process was reliant on the composition of the elites; 2/ the policy of lustration was initiated by the anti-communist parties – in the majority of cases; 3/ public opinion had a marginal influence on the decision to start the lustration process (apart from in Germany) (Letki 2002:545). The question of what constitutes 'a sufficient lustration' or a 'successful' story of settling the accounts with the past remains open and complex. As summed up by Antoni Dudek, what happened in ECE countries is a shared story - the values of liberal democracy, such as free access to records and the openness of political life, clashed with the individual rights to privacy (2011:33). He describes the opening of the archives in the ECE countries as being 'full of limitations, conflicts and dramatic events' (Dudek 2011:29).

Mink and Neumayer conclude that 'the space of memory' in post-Communist Europe is still unsteady and that no consensus on the Communist past has been reached. Instead, 'the importance of the past for political life is growing with time precisely because its moral and socio-political consequences have not really been checked' (Mink, Neumayer 2013:27). The authors use the term *memory games* to underline the political aspect of social uses of memory. The concept

> 'encompasses the various ways by which political and social actors perceive and relate to certain historical events, according to the identities they construct, the interests they defend and the strategies they devise to define, maintain or improve their position in society' (2013:28).

Pushing the social and political aspects of transitional justice into the centre of analysis allows for

> 'situating conflicts around painful histories with the "ordinary" operating of post-Communist societies, concentrating on games played by institutional actors (parties, elected officials, governments), mobilized social groups (former prisoners, groups making pilgrimages to battlefields or martyrdom sites, immigrants) and professional groups (historians and archivists, journalists)' (Mink, Neumayer 2013:28-29).

11 Compare with A. Dudek, who argues that de-communisation in Poland failed – or should be called a weak de-communisation. Due to the shape of the political transformation, which was led by the former high-profile members of the communist party, the lustration laws were limited to those who cooperated with the security services and members of the security services, while the political rights of those who were part of the communist party apparatus were not limited (Dudek 2011:17).

Such an angle enables us to go beyond the categories of success and failure in understanding the social processes of remembering the communist past, which remain multifaceted and marked with complexities. This study presents such an approach in relation to the Polish case.

The Polish case

The discussion about ways of discontinuing and accounting for the transgressions committed during communism was already taking place during the round-table talks in 1989. Dudek argues that, traditionally, since the end of the XIX century, two streams of historical policy have collided in Poland: conservative and liberal. In the 1980s and 1990s, the liberal stream of historical policy became dominant. As presented by Dudek, this was an outcome of the Polish transition and the configuration of power in the fields of politics, mass media and mass culture that resulted from it (Dudek 2008:194-195). In fact, since 1989, two approaches to the historical policy concerned with communism seem to have collided in Poland. Śpiewak writes about the polarization of the political scene around the theme of communism and distinguishes two groups shaping the public discourse on this topic - *the lustrators* and *the anti-lustrators* (2005). This division within the political elites proved decisive for the consequences of memory politics in post-communist Poland. The liberal model of historical politics took the form of official state neutrality concerning the shaping of the historical consciousness of Polish society. The liberal historical policy is based on two assumptions: firstly, Polish historiography must end with the promotion of the heroic and martyrdom-inspired vision of Polish history; secondly, the idea of the nation state should be abandoned (Dudek 2008:198). In line with the above, in 1989 the first Prime Minister of the democratic Poland, who had a *Solidarity* background, promoted a 'thick line' program [*gruba kreska*], which implied that the new government would not take responsibility for the actions of the previous regime, and would not support a retributive policy in the spirit of collective responsibility and vengeance. However, indecisive statements of symbolic condemnation and disownment of the previous state form started to appear, such as the official condemnation of the marital law of the 1980s, passed in 1992. Numerous compensation policies for the victims were also gradually implemented by consecutive governments. Eventually, in 1992, a more conservative stream emerged, and a first serious attempt at disclosure of the state security authorities' files, detailing the cooperation with the regime of the main opposition activists, took place. The Olszewski cabinet started what is colloquially called the

'war about files' [*wojna o teczki*] or a 'wild lustration' [*dzika lustracja*][12] by disclosing a number of secret security police files revealing the history of cooperation between some public figures and the repressive regime. This act of denunciation ended in the dismissal of the government; however, Polish public life witnessed the dissemination of constant acts of disclosure, and accusations of cooperation with the security forces were made against public figures. As Dudek put it, the 1992 crisis 'clearly showed that the issue of the security files is important for all of the players in the political scene'. Moreover, there was no possibility of agreement on de-communisation, lustration or the opening of the security archives (Dudek 2011:22). The allegations of cooperation with the security apparatus extended to Lech Wałęsa – the president at the time. Paradoxically, this undermined the credibility of the conservative right-wing side of the Polish political stage associated with the anti-communist opposition, since Wałęsa was its unquestioned symbol (see Śpiewak 2005:148). When, after their electoral victory, the post-communists formed a government in 1993, they adopted a strategy of non-involvement in or open rejection of the de-communisation and lustration projects, and willingly protected the privileges of the former communist functionaries, including the security officers. The 1995 electoral slogan of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the left-wing presidential candidate, 'Let's choose the future' (*Wybierzmy przyszłość*), is interpreted by some as a program of 'collective amnesia' and marginalization of the communist past as a topic irrelevant to the shape of post-communist Poland (Stobiecki 2008:177). In 1997, however, due to pressure from the public[13] who had discovered the facts about the cooperation with the security services by Józef Oleksy, a prominent left-wing politician, the lustration law was passed against the will of the post-communists (Dudek 2011:22-23). The lustration encompassed 26,000 public offices. The law obliges people applying for the listed positions to declare any previous cooperation with the security apparatus. Interestingly, a positive declaration brings no adverse consequences. Only when a person lies in a lustration process does (s)he face disqualification from public office. The actual lustration process started in 1999 after anti-communist circles gained a majority in Parliament (Dudek

12 These names were coined by *the anti-lustrators* or the supporters of a liberal historical policy. They were to underline that lustration was based on "bad" law and was used for political aims by *the lustrators* (see Śpiewak 2005:154).

13 OBOP's research from that year showed that over 70% of Poles were convinced that among the high ranking Polish state officials there were those who cooperated with the security apparatus and that they should be deprived of the right to hold such positions (Dudek 2011: 22-23).

2011:25). However, there was still no discussion on the accessibility of the security archive[14].

The conservative stream of historical policy was rejuvenated at the end of the 1990s. This was due, on the one hand, to the emergence of new infrastructure, i.e. the Institute of National Remembrance – The Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, IPN)[15] and the Warsaw Rising Museum (Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego) (Dudek 2008:197)[16] and, on the other, to agitation among right-wing intellectual circles and commentators, who initiated a discussion on the Polish historical identity and the ways in which the past could serve as a tool for consolidating a sense of national community in Poles (Dudek 2008:198). Dudek suggests that Polish society of the time - stuck in a 'phase of denial' - was not eager to face the difficult past. Politicians, on the other hand, used the 'historical weapon' and tried 'to change the contemporary reality' (Dudek 2011:12-13). When the *Solidarity Electoral Action* [*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*] came into power in 1997, it accelerated the lustration project and the policy of opening the security archive to the public. The main initiator of the law establishing the IPN[17] was Janusz Pałubicki – a member of *Solidarity* and a minister in Jerzy Buzek's government. According to the initiator, the Institute was to 'give back to the citizens what *Bezpieka*[18] gathered about them'[19] - opening the files to the public

14 Access to the archives of the communist party was also guarded and difficult to obtain after the transition (see Dudek 2011).

15 Later in the text, I refer to the Institute of National Remembrance as ‚the Institute' or I use an acronym - the IPN.

16 Dudek interestingly refers to the emergence of these two institutions as ‚infrastructure'. I will expand this term and use it later in the text as *the infrastructure of memory*, meaning all state institutions involved in the implementation of historical policy in Poland.

17 In formal terms, since the mid-1940s, there had been the Institute of National Remembrance, which was meant to document the losses suffered by Poles during WWII. At the same time, there existed another body - the Commission for the Research of German Crimes (Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich), which in 1949 assimilated the Institute of National Remembrance. In 1991, the Commission changed its name to the Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation- the Institute of National Remembrance (Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu – IPN) so as to underline the symbolic inclusion of the criminal acts committed against the Polish nation during communism. Yet, importantly, its work encompassed only the period up to 1956. These were the formal predecessors of the IPN described in this book (Dudek 2011: 42).

18 Colloquial term for security forces.

19 For instance, in Greece after the military junta regime (1967-1974), almost all the archives produced by the political police were destroyed. Dudek claims that Poland

and attempting to convict the perpetrators in order to compensate the victimized. The Institute was also instructed to analyze and describe the system of repressions and teach young Poles about the difficult past endured by society (Dudek 2011:40). The law establishing the IPN[20] was finally passed in 1998[21].

The body was modelled on the German Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Archives (*Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, BStU). As detailed on the IPN website:

> The Polish state and the public at large failed to get over with it [a difficult legacy of communism – AWM] in the first years after 1989. This is why the Institute of National Remembrance was established. Its main responsibilities include taking over and providing access to the archives of the Communist repressive apparatus, scientific research and education in the history of Poland in 1939–1989, the prosecution of the perpetrators of crimes committed at the time, and, since 2007, also the verification of vetting declarations. The IPN exercises its responsibilities through its four services: the Public Education Office, the Office for Preservation and Dissemination of Archival Records, the Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation, and the Vetting Office, all based at the Headquarters. The IPN Headquarters in Warsaw co-ordinates the operations of eleven Branch Offices and the Delegations reporting to the relevant Branch Offices (The Institute of National Remembrance Guide).

The IPN archive, called the Office for the Preservation and Dissemination of Archival Records, holds 87 kilometres of files produced between 1939 and 1989 by the Nazi and Communist repressive apparatuses. The Public Educational Office serves as a research and educational centre. It publishes strictly academic and popular scientific materials. It organizes exhibitions open to the public and runs educational programs for schools, history teachers and young historians. A recent development, the Vetting Office - which started to operate in 2007 - dis-

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avoided such a scenario because the preservation of the archive, i.e. operational contacts etc., was in the political interests of those members of the communist secret police who were positively verified and remained in the new structures of the democratic state. This was the case despite the fact that, during the first years of the new state under the rule of the communist Generał Kiszczak, who became the Minister of Interior Affairs in the first democratic government in Poland, a number of what were understood as the most crucial files were destroyed (Dudek 2011: 15-16).

20 For a detailed history of the IPN, see A. Dudek „Instytut: Osobista Historia IPN" (2011).

21 Ustawa z dnia 18 grudnia 1998 r. o Instytucie Pamięci Narodowej – Komisji Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu (Dz. U. z 2007 r., Nr 63, poz. 425 z późn. zm.). The Act was vetoed by the President, Aleksander Kwaśniewski. Parliament rejected this veto, however.

closes documents on the state security bodies, and receives and verifies the vetting declarations of persons serving in or seeking public positions. For example, in 2008, 142,000 vetting declarations were filed. The prosecutors working in the the Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation investigate Communist, Nazi and other crimes against peace and humanity committed by Communist state officials and the security bodies of the Third Reich and the USSR. Criminal proceedings are instituted *ex officio* or on the basis of allegations filed by victims, individuals and civic organizations. In 2009, the Institute reported that more than 900 investigations were pending into Communist crimes committed by Communist state officials. The dual construction, which links the prosecution office with the educational, research and archival offices, is regarded as a controversial and difficult solution and a reason for a wave of criticism of the entire Institute. Dudek claims that, in fact, these are two completely different structures that are very loosely connected (Dudek 2011:41). From the interviews I conducted in the Institute, I could see that the cooperation between the prosecutors and the historians is very weak indeed.

From my interviews with the IPN staff, it was clear that the Institute has been sensitive to changes of government and has gone through more and less intensive stages of work, depending on who was in power. Moreover, the fact that the presidency of the Institute lasts for a period of five years has proved a crucial factor in the way the Institute operates - much depends on the vision and style of the President (see Dudek 2011). The workings of the Institute were clearly invigorated during my fieldwork, when the Law and Justice Party gained decisive support in the 2005 parliamentary elections. The party was run by Lech and Jarosław Kaczyńscy, twin brothers who, during communism, were engaged in the opposition activities of *Solidarity.* Lech Kaczyński served as an advisor to Lech Wałęsa during the round-table talks and collaborated with him when Wałęsa became President. Jarosław is known for serving as an executive editor of a famous weekly, *Tygodnik Solidarność*[22]. The party declared that its aims included a clear historical policy of disclosure and education in a spirit of patriotism, as well as accounting for the communist crimes, reconstituting the true national heroes and compensating the victims of communist repression for their suffering. In 2005, when the Law and Justice Party came into power, both victims and perpetrators felt that something was changing. During the eighteen months of my fieldwork, I observed how this party's government focused on

22 For a more detailed account of the Kaczyńscy brothers, see M. Karnowski, P. Zaremba (eds) „Alfabet braci Kaczyńskich" (2010); P. Zaremba, „O jednym takim. Biografia Jarosława Kaczyńskiego" (2010); P. Semka, „Lech Kaczyński. Opowieść arcypolska" (2010).

strengthening the myth of the continuous resistance of a heroic Polish nation against communism through the incorporation and objectification of an image of a hero/victim, aiming at the same time at the conviction and marginalization of the voices of the perpetrators. The Law and Justice Party's governmental term constituted a historical moment in which the heroes/victims were given full access to resources located at the centre of power and allowed the usage thereof in the processes of self-enactments and the defining of the communist past in moral terms. At the same time, the former state security officers experienced a growing sense of uncertainty caused by an extensive public exposure of their work, which was defined as morally flawed or evil, as well as by the open discussion of crimes committed under the auspices of the security apparatus.

Theoretical influences

Infrastructure and cultural form of memory

In this ethnographic case, the infrastructure of memory remains crucial for the socially conditioned processes of remembering the past by the aforementioned two groups of people[23]. Within the structure of the Polish state, a number of institutions play a participatory role in the creation of values and meanings in reference to the communist past. I will refer to those I encountered during my fieldwork through the work with my informants. The IPN remains the central element of the infrastructure. However, the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Culture and the President, as well as local authorities, courts, schools, and museums, all participate in the processes of objectification of the past. The Office for Matters of Combatants and Persecuted Persons [*Urząd ds. Kombatantów i Osób Represjonowanych*] is, apart from the IPN, one of the main bodies mediating individual processes of objectifying the self in reference to the communist past. The Office is responsible for allocating identity cards, privileges and rights to veterans and repressed persons; it is further responsible for propagating the tradition of the Polish fight for independence, as well as providing veterans and repressed people with honour, care and protection. The ethnography of the Association will shed more light on the ways in which institutionalized forms of objectification enter the interactional order of social life and become effective for people's perceptions of the self and the communist past.

23 See, for a comparison, Levy and Sznajder (2006), who argue for the diminishing role of the state in the processes of social remembering, which they depict as increasingly global and cosmopolitan (their argument refers in particular to the memory of the Holocaust).

I found Michael Herzfeld's notion of *national bureaucracy* useful for understanding ways in which individual memory work intersects with the historical policy implemented by state institutions. He coined the term in order to highlight bureaucratic management of personal, social and national identities (1992:3). He viewed state order as a narratively and systematically controlled symbolic system (38), while bureaucracy in this perspective is treated as the management of taxonomy (39), as ritual, understood as patterned and ordered sequences of acts, whose content and arrangement is characterized by formality, stereotype, condensation and redundancy (18). However, apart from the evident state rituals, he turned his attention to 'rituals of personal commitment' - 'practices that are sometimes less obviously ritualistic' (37), arguing that the efficacy of bureaucracy relies as much on grand collective acts as on emotive personal practices revolving around them. The logic of the nation state implies defining 'who we are' (46), and such definitions necessarily imply defining the past in the light of the present. In this book, my main interest lies at the intersection of institutionally conventionalized aspects of the communist past and the individual modes of remembering that past undertaken by the political actors who were involved in it. I will hence locate my analysis in both ritual collective acts and emotive personal practices, although these two will occasionally collide in my analysis as they do in real life.

Michael Silverstein's work on 'wider-scale institutional orders of interactionality' that are historically contingent, yet structured (2004:623), helped me add the concept of power to the dyad of official-personal memory. By 'institutional orders of interactionality', Silverstein meant historically emergent institutional orders that structure people's interactions and influence the positions and values they express and believe in. The centres of value and creation of meaning[24] influence the ways in which people interact, what they say to each other, and how they commit to various events and issues (623). The access to those centres is changing, thus reflecting the political and social asymmetries of the given society. The notion of sociality in his view should be understood as cultural beliefs and role-alignments that structure everyday interactions (627). In my field, such centres should be associated with the aforementioned infrastructure of memory and the associational work. In this book, I will use the terms 'centre(s) of semiosis', 'institutional centres', or 'national bureaucracy' to indi-

24 I understand the centres of semiosis, in line with M. Silverstein (2004) and I. Blommaert (2001, 2005), as an institutionalized, and hence legitimated, source of semiotic resources emergent from the social action of allied interest groups, achieved through already established cultural tools. Such emergent resources are appropriated by groups and individuals in their effort to obtain a sense of belonging, an internal coherence of their stories in accordance with a larger collective narrative.

cate the bureaucratic infrastructure of memory in which meaning concerning the communist past is produced and disseminated so as to influence subjectivities, their sense of belonging and modes of remembering. As I will illustrate later on, these channels structure occasions on which individuals can perform their identities and express convictions about the past.

My fieldwork material aims to give a sense of the changing cultural form of memory and historical policies emerging from within the collapsing communist regime, one manifestation of which surfaced along with the Law and Justice Party's political victory. The allied anti-communist social forces (The Law and Justice Party, parts of the catholic clergy[25], those who were repressed by the communist apparatus) participated in the implementation of their version of the memory project, believing themselves capable of evoking a new sense of moral order based on true patriotic values in society. Through access to the state 'institutions of boundary maintenance' (Wimmer 2002), such as law, entitlements and state rituals, these actors united in an effort to frame the past and actual ideological conflict in moral terms. Such framing was enabled by the larger transnational processes, the institutional infrastructure, the past transgressions committed by the members of state institutions, and the experiences of humiliation and suffering of the heroes/victims, who served as symbolic capital for the alliance. This alliance simultaneously believed in the necessity of achieving a new moral quality on a societal level, and realized its own political aims through engagement in the bureaucratized production of that particular cultural form. By analyzing the interactively produced cultural meanings, symbols, practices and discourses, which I call a *cultural form of memory politics*, I simultaneously focus on the process of experiencing the self, which is conditioned by individual involvements in the process of implementing this form.

Jeanette Mageo and Bruce Knauft, in their introduction to a volume on power and subjectivity, claim that political perspectives that do not engage with psychological theorizing are incomplete (2002). Understanding and discussing the

25 The Catholic Church is not a unanimous supporter of the conservative historical policy. For instance, Father Tischner (a priest and philosopher, the first chaplain of the *Solidarity* trade union) was recognized as a liberal and an enemy of conservative right-wing thinkers (Śpiewak 2005: 131); he argued that it was too late for a judgement since those who created the repressive regime died and those who built upon their legacy should not bear the same responsibility (Śpiewak 2005: 146). P. Śpiewak (2005) describes the official position of the Church towards lustration and historical policy in the 1990s as reliant on the following assumptions: ‚it is not possible to escape the evaluation of the past; equally, it is not proper to throw easy accusations; public order calls for reconciliation and purification' (136) - this message is not in line with the voice recorded by me during fieldwork at the so-called ‚patriotic masses' attended by the heroes/victims.

social consequences of such processes as lustration, historical policy or retroactive justice requires knowledge that goes beyond statistics or analysis of public discourse. As my ethnographic example illustrates, the categories of people most affected by such policies interact emotionally with implemented solutions. Their sense of self-esteem, justice, their place in history and their dignity are all affected by the interaction with the bureaucratized framework of memory politics. Evaluation of such policies should not take place without an understanding of how people such as those portrayed in this work experience and participate in the enactments of these politicized decisions. Political oppression or the workings of a modern national polity should not be read as abstracted from individual life-worlds. It should be analyzed from the perspective of its ability to impact upon people's psychologies and individual involvements in it. It should not be regarded as abstracted power with undefined sources. My ambition in this study was to give a sense of the interconnectedness of transnational processes, grand social transitions, specific political projects, and individual psychologies.

Emic perspectives on history

The historically shifting social stance of my informants imposed a diachronic perspective on this study. I particularly wished to keep in the background of this work what Otto Brunner called the 'changes in long-term structures of social conditionality' in order to shed light on the processes of self-articulation performed by social groups who commit themselves to interpreting recent history (Koselleck 2002:22) and their sense of who they are. I believe that the predominant tone of this study, characterized by anthropological attention to details of social life, its history and individual psychologies, will complement macrosociological studies looking at society from a bird's-eye perspective, as well as historical works attentive to la longue durée of what happened before the transition and what came after it.

More and more frequently, anthropologists and historians cross the disciplinary boundaries. With the growing interest in *history from below* or social history, historians, traditionally biased towards documentary records, have become more amenable to unconventional sources and oral history. In common with anthropology, they aim at reconstructing the perceptions of those 'beneath or at the margins of the historical record' (Thomas 2002:413). Hayden White presented history as one kind of remembering, no different from other types of recall, while anthropologists through their ethnographic works – such as Laura Bohannan's work in the 1950s - stressed that 'all narratives of the past have to be understood in terms of the nature of the society in which they are told' (Bloch 2002a: 547). Remaining sensitive to emic perspectives, anthropologists con-

struct the kind of inquiries that do not impose Western notions of history and causation, understanding them as one way of cognizing about the past. They search for distinctive ways in which social groups understand time and frame past events in forms of indigenous historical narratives (Thomas 2002:417), performances (Argenti 2007; Berliner 2010; Feldman 2010), landscapes, material objects and proxemics (Filippucci 2010; Pichler 2010; Witeska-Młynarczyk 2012) or specific interactions among generations (Kidron 2010; Feuchtwang 2010). Anthropologists underline the variety of cultural representations of the past, commemorative practices, and the historical and social contexts of memory production (Antze, Lambek 1996:147.) Hence, this manuscript can be read as an attempt to depict particular styles and genres of indigenous historicity as cultivated among the heroes/victims, former security officers and Polish society at large in reference to the communist past. As I will argue in the next chapter, the way in which the people portrayed in this ethnography conceptualize and linguistically process the passage of time is heavily reliant on academic history writing. Ian Hacking argues that *the science of memory* has established a third realm of power mediated by expert knowledge - a *memoro-politics* - in which claims about memory have come to take the moral and political place, adding one more dimension to the notion of memory (Antze, Lambek 1996:66).

Memory: a multidimensional figure

From the very outset, this project was meant to be about memory. While exploring the literature, I soon realized how complex and layered this concept had become: difficult to grasp and capable of being many different things at the same time. It means both 'phenomenological ground of identity' and the modes of 'explicit identity construction' (Antze, Lambek 1996:XVII). It signifies commemorative practices and material signifiers (Gallinat 2006; Nora 1989; Rowlands, Tilley 2006; Winter 1995; White 2006; Young 1993) as well as embodied aspects of memory (Connerton 1989; Kidron 2010). It encompasses individual processes of remembrance (Baddeley 1997; Tulving 1972) and collective aspects of remembering and forgetting (Halbwachs 1992[1952]). The simultaneous functioning of the term in various disciplines, which stress different aspects of the phenomenon, prompted some scholars to call for the bridging of seemingly contradictory perspectives in search of a more holistic approach (Bartlett 1995; Bloch 1989; Cole 2001; Stewart 2004). In order to tackle the links between individual and collective modes of remembering and forgetting, it became crucial to ask more questions about the relations between socio-cultural and political contexts and the mental states of the subjects who do the memory work and transmit knowledge of their past experience. This knowledge is used by the

subjects to construct coherent representations of the self; it is also objectified in order to serve the symbolic politics of the state (Feldman 2004; Verdery 1999). In this work, I aimed at grasping the phenomenon of memory from many different angles, which nonetheless belong to the same figure of a particular cultural time and semiotically transformed place. By linking the analysis of various institutional contexts in which the memory project is being produced with a careful microsociology of individual processes of self-management in the time between communism and post-communism, I try to give a fuller sense of the phenomenological reality of the intense realization of the Polish memory project in the 2000s. I identify with Urlic Neisser's call for *ecological validity,* i.e. for researching memory in detailed ways, as it operates in the real world, as opposed to undertaking laboratory studies (1982). This monograph, in line with the anthropological tradition, is a study of the real world, real talk, real emotions and real experience of memory.

Similarly, Laurence Kirmayer underlines the importance of the lived context in which the struggle with the past takes place, as well as the role of imagination in the process of remembering and forgetting (Antze, Lambek 1996:148). My task in this research was to locate the knowledge structures about the past and the infrastructure organizing social action that guide individual constructive retrievals from memory. I focused on the process of construction in which memory took the form of collective *moral practice* (Lambek 1996). The tensions in the constructive process of remembering should be understood as located at the intersection of processes of perception, development of self-schemata, group interaction, and collective instances of objectification and conventionalizing, which guide individual processes of remembering and constructing the self. The moral function of memory should be located in its capacity to make people face up to what they would like to forget. The memories can be fully evoked when they fit socially approved cultural forms; hence, as argued by Kirmayer, it is society that must provide individuals with a range of narrative forms, which allow for the construction of coherent stories of the selves (Kirmayer 1996:193). Memory projects, such as the one analyzed in this book, fulfil a moral function of forcing or inviting people to go back to a difficult past and making it usable in the present. My ethnography describes a moment in time when various narrative, material and ritual forms are provided through state channels for the heroes/victims to support their effort to construct coherent stories of themselves. The production of such stories is simultaneously represented as a means of achieving unity on a national level. I argue, however, that such processes of achieving self-coherence through involvement in the institutionally legitimized cultural form are characterized by ambiguity and generate a sense of insecurity. In particular, I mean that individual efforts to become heroes/victims within the

framework of memory politics of the nation/state when the political agenda changes following electoral victories of different parties remains an insecure endeavour. As Antonius Robben and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco convincingly argue, the most important step in rehabilitating the victims of political repression is an unequivocal acknowledgement of the reality of what they endured. It is the social context that influences the self-perceptions and recovery of those traumatized (2000:12). Meanwhile, in the field, I did not see the condition of unequivocality being achieved. The members of the Association with whom I worked happened, for example, to find drawings of swastikas on the Associational door. Such acts of denial brought great unrest to their world.

On the other hand, the chapters devoted to the security officers aim at illustrating ways in which the cultural form of memory politics in Poland has caused the disintegration of themselves, and feelings of national exclusion and condemnation. The main defensive reaction to this situation implied a distancing from responsibility and guilt, and an inability to comprehend this denial of belonging to the nation state, because of, *inter alia*, a strong belief, into which they were socialized, that they were serving this nation. Robben and Suarez-Orozco suggest that it is important to look at the ways in which social institutions provide the tools and psychological support for the committing of crimes. What they call the "bureaucracy of terror" implies that members of institutions such as the security apparatus in Poland are socialized into a sense of righteousness about their cause and actions (2000:9). The former security officers went through such a socialization process within the structures of the apparatus of repression. Their narratives carry its hallmarks, and their beliefs prevent them from feeling as though they are a part of the political reality I researched.

Lambek proposed that 'the questions to ask of any given acts of memory are what is affirmed and what is denied' (1996:239). With such questions, one moves away from treating memory as a 'neutral representation' towards understanding it as a dynamic social process involving a set of claims about the past (1996:239). This manuscript illustrates conflicting claims to the past, one group of which is affirmed through the state channels, while the other one is denied. While in the field, I observed how each enactment of the memory project ignites the memory work and objectifying practices on all of these levels, and how closely they are interlinked and interdependent. Pulling various threads from the literature, I have tried to paint the multidimensional landscape of Polish memory – moving from a description of various manifestations of the emergent cultural form of memory politics towards the myriad interactive and imaginative modes of its appropriation and reproduction. Steve Stern proposes that we view memory as "the meaning we attach to experience, not only recall of the events and emotions of that experience" (2004:105). In line with Maurice Halbwachs'

idea of *memory frameworks*, he makes a distinction between the content of memory and the organizing framework that imparts meaning. Stern calls such organizing frameworks *emblematic memory*. Emblematic memory gives directions to individual interpretations as it provides selection criteria for personal memory. However, it also frames counter-memory, and shapes cultural and political debate. Hence, it is intrinsically collective in nature. Eventually, a plurality of emblematic memories surfacing in a society may lead to a contest of truths about the past. Some memories necessarily exist in the void of emblematic memory. In such cases, individual recall and remembering remain 'loose'. *Loose memory* means that "disarticulated from group meaning or frameworks, personal lore of experience cannot acquire value as symbol or emblem of a great collective experience. At best they circulate as personal anecdotes or curiosities on the margins of social imaginary, in tiny, fragmented personal circles" (Stern 2006:106)[26]. As the chapters to follow will illustrate, the *emblematic framework* implemented by the historical policy of the Law and Justice Party helped order the heroes/victims' memories and guided their selection. The security officers who felt an affinity to a different framework were disoriented by that memory project and their loose memory seemed badly suited to it.

Trying to research the dynamics of appropriation of loose memories by *emblematic frameworks*, I found Goodwin's theoretical stand on action and embodiment, understood as situated human interaction, helpful. His pragmatic approach takes as a starting point a notion of human action understood as conditioned by 'simultaneous deployment of a range of quite different kinds of semiotic resources' (2000:1489). He argues that 'a theory of action must come to terms with both the details of language use and the way in which the social, cultural, material and sequential structure of the environment where action occurs figure into its organization' (2000:1498). According to this view, the individual action of remembering and forgetting should be understood within a context-dependent framework that systematizes it, directs the processes of selection and provides it with various semiotic resources. The body, which remembers, forgets, represents and objectifies the past, achieves such practices in a dynamic process of unfolding and is imagined as an 'interactively organized locus for the production and display of meaning and action' (2000:1490). Here, the stress on the sequence resembles Paul Connerton's argument about the embodied repeatability of memory practices (1989). The heroes/victims, through a repeatable

26 It is important to keep in mind that a number of *emblematic frameworks* of various kinds operate in everyday life and structure *loose memory*. These may be frameworks worked out within families or peer groups. *Emblematic memory* is not limited to historical polices and grand societal projects.

ritual and everyday enactments of this self-representation, move towards the development of a stable schema of the self and one's experience lived during communism. The first part of the book aims to show this movement from participation to internalization of objectified self-representations. In particular, the institutionalized aspects of the memory projects are realized through a sequential structure and repeatability, which creates a sense of lasting assurance. This book therefore tries to show how the infrastructure of memory generates a cultural form of self-perception, which relies on a sequential and repeatable possibility of experiencing the self in a collectively achieved framework of 'hero/victim' or 'perpetrator'. Researching during the Law and Justice Party's term in office, I observed how meaning was generated, and how it linked individuals with a larger myth of a nation in very subtle ways. I observed how national bureaucracy[27] 'exerts a structuring, value-conferring influence on any particular event of discursive interaction with respect to the meanings and significance of the verbal and semiotic forms used in it' (Silverstein 2004:623). In fact, the centre of semiosis penetrates much deeper into the social fabric as it reaches the human emotional worlds, never fully objectified and realized.

Embodiment, self-schemata, narrative

The micro-level of this analysis is constituted by the focus on the individual body, as it experiences and interacts with larger processes of objectification of the past. Csordas argues that:

> Objectification is the product of reflective, ideological knowledge, whether it be in the form of colonial Christianity, biological science, or consumer culture. Our lives are not always lived in objectified bodies, for our bodies are not originally objects to us. They are instead the ground of perceptual process that ends in objectification, and the play between preobjective and objectified bodies within our own culture is precisely what is at issue in many of the contemporary critiques (Csordas 1994:7).

27 I studied the centres of semiosis looking at institutional discourses, conducting participant observation and analysing materiality. During the fieldwork, I first located such centres of semiosis while following my informants in their everyday lives. The state, historiography and the Church channels as well as mass media proved to be the most significant centres of value creation in regard to the communist past. Hence, I collected a number of texts, and recorded a number of discursive events, including natural conversations, which occurred in authoritative settings or in relation to the meanings generated in these centres. In the case of the heroes/victims, I followed them to commemorative events organized by the Association of the heroes/victims, state officials, state institutions such as the IPN, NGOs, and the Church. For the security officers, the main materials were those of the mass media and the hearings during the trial of one of the officers.

In this sense, I aim to trace the *embodiment*, understood as an 'immediate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and modes of presence and engagement' (Csordas 1994:11), of the heroes/victims and the perpetrators in the memory project and the movement they make between pre-objective and objectified through a collective effort - be it in the form of a monument, a medal or an act of accusation.

Further, to study the intersection of the collective memory project and individual processes of remembering, I found the notion of self-schemata (Marcus 1977) helpful. In the cognitive psychology paradigm, self-schemata are explained as cognitive structures about the self, which organize, summarize and explain one's behaviour. These schemata - generalizations about the self based on the experience of the past - work towards organizing information related to the self by linking particular schemata with empirical referents. Hazel Marcus argued that self-schemata 'facilitate the processing of information about the self (judgements and decisions about the self), contain easily retrievable behavioural evidence, provide a basis for the confident self-prediction of behaviour on schemata-related dimensions, and make individuals resistant to counterschematic information' (Marcus 1977:63). Martin Conway complements this by explaining that memories are dynamic constructions of knowledge and arguing that a memory consists of a steady schema for its activation established across the indices of long-term structures of autobiographical memory, as well as of the set of control processes that guide the construction of such schemata. In a constructed view of autobiographical memory, self-schemata *ground the self*, meaning they limit the range of possible selves experienced and objectifiable by an individual (Conway 1997:5). In line with this literature, while analyzing the heroes/victims I tackled the processes of construction of personal memory mediated by the actions of state institutions and grounding of the schemata about the self in a larger framework of national history developed by conservative historical policy, which tended to make the heroes/victims resistant to counterschematic information about the self. I further analyzed the security officers' interactions with frameworks of *emblematic memory* solidified during my fieldwork in order to determine how it undermined their knowledge about the self.

For the perpetrators, internalization of the collectively constructed frameworks implies resisting it in the processes of reconstructing the self. Deriving inspiration from Alexandra Argenti-Pillen's work on civil war-torn Sri Lanka, I treat the state security officers' modes of communication as 'a form of micropolitical reorganization' in the context of persisting social tensions understood as a legacy of the authoritative regime (Argenti-Pillen 2003). What formed the security officers' memory frameworks and provided them with schemata for remembering the past worked towards veiling their transgressions through rationalizing

techniques that made them look legitimate and just, or merely insignificant. The knowledge structures disseminated through social practice in the past strengthened in them a set of self-constructs that are difficult to maintain in the context of the memory politics fostered by the Law and Justice Party. The discrepancy between the frameworks now causes a sense of disorientation and activates a self-defence mechanism in the form of a language of distancing from responsibility, and feelings of shame and guilt. Guilt is characterized by an experienced sense of tension, remorse and regret over transgression (Niedenthal et al. 1994:587), while shame involves self-evaluation, implying the overwhelming feeling of being a bad person (Niedenthal et al. 1994:586). While the memory politics evoke a sense of shame in the security officers, they take semiotic measures to defend themselves against it, and in their narratives they are only rarely able to enact feelings of guilt, which are nonetheless veiled.

To analyze the self-constructs of the security officers, I had available only their stories, most commonly their life stories and evaluative narratives about the present – usually presented in a confessional style. Such limitations were dictated by the difficulty of accessing this group of informants, who were conditioned by their fear of talking about the past. They valued their anonymity and were only willing to meet face to face, in a 'comfortable' place, frequently asking me to switch off the recorder. They lacked a clear, or at least visible, network of support. The only social situations of affirmation I observed were informal and accidental meetings of two or more former security officers. I witnessed only three such meetings; nevertheless, I can point to the relevance of such contexts in the maintenance of resistance and defence strategies among the security officers in reaction to the memory project.

Because of the nature of the data I collected, in analyzing the memory work of the state security officers and the heroes/victims, I have turned to narrative studies, with a particular focus on the narrative of the self. I collected personal autobiographical stories evoked by the state security officers that appeared as a reaction to the cultural forms that dominated the public discourse during my fieldwork. Hart and Fegley (in Callero 2003) point to how narratives constitute tools for dealing with situations of departure from legitimacy in the context of social change. In this sense, the self of the security officers is understood as a reflexive self, which can interpret and objectify the self in the condition of social change (Callero 2003:119). The officers reveal the universal human capacity to process knowledge in an interpretative way (Bruner 1991:8). The self-narratives, understood as reflexive processes, have a dynamic dimension. 'Being born out of experience', they simultaneously give shape to it (Ochs and Capps 1996:20). I treat the narratives of the security officers as generic despite their particularity. I treat them as tokens of broader types (Bruner 1991:6) conditioned by the infra-

structure of memory and collective and individuated memory practices. The *genericness* of these narratives (Bruner 1991:14) should be recognized in the typical language of distancing, and the prevailing opacity of the accounts. The narratives are structured by the intention to defend oneself and maintain a self-coherence. They manifest the ambiguity of lived experience and allow for numerous possibilities of describing it. As Roy Harris put it, 'narratives are not unsponsored texts' (cited after Bruner 1991:10). Bruner argues that intention provides the basis for interpretation as well as for the ways in which the story is told (Bruner 1991:11). In this sense, the narratives of the security officers are understood as consequences of their current social position, which threatens their well-established self-constructs; these are so attractive and comforting that the officers make great efforts to maintain them. However, this turns out to be a particularly difficult task, since, as Bruner argued:

> One of principal ways in which we work "mentally" in common, I would want to argue, is by the process of joint narrative accrual. Even our individual autobiographies, as I have argued elsewhere, depend on being placed within a continuity provided by a constructed and shared social history in which we locate our Selves and our individual continuities (Bruner 1991:20).

This is why historical memory understood as social practice remains so relevant for the individual processes of remembering.

Hence, the narratives of my informants are understood as a *narrative practice* meaning simultaneously 'the activities of storytelling, the resources used to tell stories, and the auspices under which stories are told' (Gubrium and Holstein 1998:164). They are understood as 'storytellers engaged in the work of constructing coherence under the circumstances of storytelling' (Gubrium and Holstein 1998:164). Narrative practice is simultaneously a memory practice and a moral practice, as it constitutes a process of expressing one's entitlement to the truth about the past, which, at the same time, defines the self. Importantly, this memory practice is structured by social occasions for objectifying the past in the form of a narrative, but also in other forms of embodied social action. These occasions are differently structured for the heroes/victims and for the security officers. This work aims to demonstrate the contrast and explain the social mechanisms accounting for the shape of these two different generic types of self-narrative and embodied social action.

'[…] a full understanding of self-meanings, self-images, and self-concepts requires a broad conceptualization of context, one that extends beyond the immediate definition of the situation to include the historical and cultural settings where unarticulated assumptions about the nature of the person have their origin' (Callero 2003:121).

The book is organized in a way that enables it to sketch the social contexts of memory politics and give a sense of the resources provided by various centres of semiosis for memory practices. When data allow it, the analysis addresses interactive, locally grounded discursive events in order to give a precise idea of the specific occasions for objectifying the self. Eventually, the ethnography reaches the level of the individual, focusing on his/her internal struggle in this particular cultural context of remembering.

Myself in the landscape of the Polish memory

> The subject of the human sciences is man, yet the man who studies himself as he practices the human sciences will always allow his preferences and prejudices to interfere in the way he defines himself to himself. What is interesting in man is not subject to scientific decision but results and always will result from a choice which is ultimately of a philosophical order (Lévi-Strauss 1973:ix).

This ethnography should also be considered from an angle constituting an 'ethnography at home'. Some people ask me why I was interested in these particular two groups of people, supposing that my family history implied a political engagement of some sort. At first, I readily denied any connection. Yet, later, I started to wonder how the topic may have become rooted in me. Throughout the main body of the book, I avoided imposing myself on the reader. This was partially because I believed that the material I had gathered should be given priority in terms of exposure, and should be presented without reflective interruptions. Nevertheless, in contemporary anthropological writing, the process of explaining the ethnographer's position vis-à-vis his or her subjects, particularly if it is an anthropology 'at home', has become an unquestionable standard that helps the reader evaluate the work and understand the way it has unfolded.

One can live in Poland or be a citizen of this country without going back to the communist past or feeling a sense of belonging to the nation. This was certainly the case for me as, for the most part, I disliked the public events of disclosure or the pathos of freedom evoked by the new elites. I did not really live through communism. I do not feel obliged to judge it or commemorate aspects of it in whatever form. In fact, I do not feel inclined to any sort of politicized and national experience either – be it the death of the Pope or the entry into the European Union. I do, however, have a very strong curiosity about other people and their ways of living through events, especially when they conceive of reality very differently from how I conceive of it.

I was born in 1979, ten years before the representatives of *Solidarity*, the Catholic Church and the Communist Party sat at the round table to talk things over. My mum, coming from a peasant family with a strong national and anti-

communist inclination, moved to the town from a village in her teens and graduated there from a technical college before becoming a professional economist. She worked in various state-owned companies, queued in the shops, and was a full-time parent to her kids. My dad, half-orphaned early in his youth, was a real city boy of a workers' family origin. Very keen on biking, he pursued a sports career as a cyclist and later as a coach; in the meantime, he happened to work as a dresser in a theatre, or, during the transformation, as a businessman - a profession taken up by a significant percentage of Poles at that time. He has been less explicit about his political beliefs in comparison to my mum. During our family life, I have seen them befriended by all sorts of people, regardless of their political views. Two of my older brothers, who came into this world around a decade earlier than me and my youngest brother, both went through a period of anti-communist involvement, fascinated with *Solidarity* and the protests that erupted every now and then in the town. My mum played forbidden political songs on the Grundig radio at home, and she felt fearful and proud at the same time when my youngest brother and I, as little kids, started to sing them in front of two militia officers on the streets during martial law. She collected such stories of small everyday resistance in her memory, turning them into icons of our family life, recalling them every now and then as if such acts made a difference. To me, they were amusing little tales, such as the story of my eldest brother, who cut the red flags with a razor everywhere in the town during a national-communist holiday; or the one about my middle brother, who was hidden by an old women in her apartment one night when the militia guys tried to catch him on the streets during the riots; or the one about my youngest brother, who overheard my parents talking about the civic protests due to take place that evening, which involved turning on the TVs at news time and putting them in the windows with the screens facing the outside, and the way he insisted on doing that with our TV, screaming and crying, and how we eventually did it. Looking at her, and listening to how she tells these stories, I feel greatly moved, because I see how they function as her treasures. I see, at the same time, how she fits them into larger myths of the national resistance, almost as if we were anti-communist soldiers. Perhaps we were. At least, as far as she is concerned, every single thought made a difference - except that the events and thoughts we choose to turn into icons are necessarily selected. And the memories such as the one of herself quarrelling with her dad, arguing that communism was good as it allowed her to go to school in the city, slip into oblivion, interpreted as the thoughts of a stupid young girl. Meanwhile, I find this thought very legitimate.

My status as a young female researcher of Polish origin, albeit academically affiliated to a foreign country, surely had an impact on the kind of relationships I was able to build and the kind of stories I gathered during this research. Both my

and my informants' identities should be read as being situated in and having emerged from our interaction. As Riessman put it,

> Informants do not „reveal" an essential self as much as they perform a preferred self, selected from the multiplicity of selves or persona that individuals switch between as they go about their lives (Riessman 2000:12).

The same holds for a performance of being a researcher. Because of my age, I was treated by both groups of men, much older than myself, as a novice and a listener who ought to learn about a past situated way beyond her life experience. At first, I played this role eagerly but, with time, it began to weigh heavily on me since it often resulted in the conversation becoming mired in iconic stories. The much older men gathering in the Association treated me more like a granddaughter – they would be concerned for my health, they would want me to pass on their legacy to future generations, and they would affectionately call me 'our Ania' (*nasza Ania*). Unlike some granddaughters, I was patient; I showed a keen interest in their stories and waited for such moments when the performance of the preferred self collapsed to be replaced by emotions, hesitations and undesired selves triggered by factors other than me. The British affiliation meant that I was very welcome in the Association. Conversing with someone from a university based in London, they reasoned that their stories would be heard internationally. Then again, for me it meant that their preferred or socially expected selves were performed with an even greater emphasis. To overcome this, to make them forget about 'abroad' for a while, I had to display my Polishness, my rootedness and involvement in stories similar to theirs, and my competence to listen to their everyday problems. A few of them played out their masculinity, seeing in me a woman whom they ought to impress with it. Being a man in that context meant referring to the past indices of courage and cleverness built in the notion of a national heroism to which they thought I was attracted. For some reason, I felt uncomfortable in this register with people who were the age of the grandfather I never had. From a distance, I can see that I did not develop a close research relationship with these heroes/victims, who treated me like a woman rather than a granddaughter.

With the former security officers, I had to be a "safe" interlocutor. Foreign affiliation was of great help, especially in the case of those officers who invigilated the university staff during the communist era. Being young was also an advantage, and they often thought of me as much younger then I really was. My identity of a young woman who writes for an academic audience abroad made them feel comfortable enough to forget, from time to time, about the political circumstances that restrained their words. Many of those from among the second generation of officers clearly wanted to impress me with their masculinity based

on shrewdness, their prestige derived from their position in the apparatus of repression, and their nervelessness. Yet, there were also cases where I became a female friend who listens to worrisome confessions and allows various rationalizations, otherwise never spoken about, to be verbalized and made socially significant. Eventually, there were people who just wanted to 'say things' and this motive completely overshadowed my person and my gender. I never confronted these people and their stories, firstly, because I did not want to lose them, and secondly, because I thought they revealed much in such a set-up. However, I was also reluctant to engage too deeply in our identity games, regardless of whether they were based on sexuality or fraternity. My strategy was to be an observer whom they liked, albeit not excessively.

In a sense, I could say that I stepped into this research from the grey zone - that part of society seriously engaged in neither the opposition nor the communist party or the workings of the security apparatus. During my fieldwork, I tried to empathise with both sides and to leave judgements aside. Such an approach seemed important to me because it encouraged the former security officers to speak and reminded me to move beyond canonical narratives with the heroes/victims. It is for the reader to evaluate the quality of my interpretations.

Structure

The manuscript is divided into two parts. The first five chapters describe the world in which the heroes/victims remember and forget. The sixth chapter, followed by three final chapters comprising the second part of the book, constitutes a transition towards the second part, dealing with the ways in which the former security officers remember their past in the light of the intensive memory politics implemented by the Law and Justice Party government.

The first chapter proposes viewing contemporary Polish historiography as a component of a cultural form of memory politics – a technology of meaningful processing of the past, used in contemporary Poland for pushing forward one's claims about the truth, as well as constituting a tool enabling a performance of a hero/victim self. In chapter two, by scrutinizing the workings of the Association of the Former Prisoners of the Communist Period, I argue that the bureaucratized processes of objectification of the hero/victim identity are consequential for the individual processes of remembering and experiencing the self. I illustrate the way in which the state mediates the social practice of acquiring a subject position vis-à-vis one's past, which allows the achieving of a sense of integrity and moral order. In chapter three, I undertake an analysis of twelve sermons uttered during the 'patriotic masses' organized for/or by the heroes/victims on various nationally and locally relevant occasions. Sermons constitute another

cultural vehicle through which the communist past is being objectified. They work towards the creation of a comfort zone which legitimizes and enables the experience of a hero/victim self. Chapter four comprises an investigation into a conversation that occurred in the Association after the mass media had announced that one of the archbishops had cooperated with the security services. The event-centred conversation is analyzed as a moral action through which the group integrates new contents into the myth that legitimizes them. The analysis reveals how cultural concepts grounded in the larger memory project are being put into practice, as well as focusing on ways in which the members of the Association enact the hero/victim self during interaction. Chapter five focuses on the individual life story of the President of the Association. Here, I point to the space of ambiguity between the collectively enacted frameworks and the experience of the self in time. I trace ways in which an individual account of life takes shape when the new constellation of power relations emerges. The chapter focuses on the intersection of the individual interpretative efforts concerning the past and the resources generated through the institutional channels of the state, useful for enacting the self in time.

The bridge between the first and the second part of the book is constituted by chapter six, which focuses on the collective commemorative practices involving the symbolic appropriation of the landscape. I follow the practices of acknowledgement and erasure legitimately performed through the state channels. I analyze the place of the heroes/victims, the former state security officers and the non-involved in reference to commemorative rituals that leave material marks on the landscape.

The second part opens with chapter seven, which contains an analysis of the legal processes and the Law and Justice Party's discourse on the state security officers and a need for a new historical policy. It argues that the accusations made against the state security officers constitute an element of the politically sensitive processes of clarifying and affirming social definitions in the aftermath of communism. It further introduces interpretative frameworks used by the state security officers to deal with the past by presenting their narratives. Such juxtaposition is intended to reveal the discrepancy between the politically legitimized versions of the past disseminated and the modes of remembering and objectifying the past undertaken by the security officers. Chapter nine consists of an analysis of the trial of one of the Marianowice security officers accused of committing a communist crime. It focuses on ways in which the authoritative situation of a court case shapes people's modes of recalling and narrating the past. The main thread of the chapter is devoted to the modes of remembering and representing the self undertaken by the accused as fostered by the trial situation. The second part of the manuscript closes with a chapter analyzing the life

narratives of two state security officers. In this final chapter, I point at the current situatedness of this group characterized by a sudden shift in social position and access to resources. I analyze their sense of disorientation and efforts to maintain a coherent image of the self. I point to the language of distancing as one of the defence mechanisms used by them in a situation in which they find themselves publicly condemned.

Marianowice

Marianowice is a name given to real places. It lies between four hills. A tiny river cuts through the city. The seasons are changeable there – harsh winters and hot summers bridged by mild springs and nostalgic autumns. Similarly, the great wars and foreign invasions that occurred in that locality were fragmented by periods of peace, freedom and self-governance. When the last big war started, brothers and sisters became involved in divergent political agendas; some stood against each other in violent confrontation. Marianowice inhabitants also witnessed mass killings[28]. After the war was over, the divisions that occurred in the national body deepened, and indelible scars were left behind by the implemented mode of governance. Many atrocities and humiliations of various magnitudes took place in the surrounding area over the last century. Now, some of the people of Marianowice have attempted to selectively unravel them and translate them into the collective myth to strengthen the spirit of the imagined community. I was there to try to understand that endeavour.

28 Marianowice's landscape was heavily marked by the Holocaust. Even though omnipresent in this locality, Jewish memory and remnants of that past are rarely acknowledged in this book. This is not due to the ignorance of the writer. My informants, focused on living through the ‚Polish' memory project, notoriously omit Jewish tropes and do not use them in the process of constructing their identity and their version of the past. In this sense, the Jewish memory is silenced or not acknowledged; at times, it is perceived as competing, and certainly ‚not ours'.

Chapter One
Hidden Dialogicality: personal memory, expert knowledge, historical policy, and pedagogy of patriotism

Since the work of Pierre Nora, it is no longer obvious that 'history' is simply a profession aiming at an objective reconstruction of the past, while 'memory' is subjective, emotional and flawed (Stern 2006:XXVII). Rather, social research has recently started to explore the intersections of both and the ways in which memory and history feed each other. In my ethnographic case, historical works constituted a necessary element in the production of personal narratives about the past[29], nested in a particular context of the telling, capable of fabricating potent and powerful representations of the past. Such representations were disseminated and legitimized in a form of historical policy and helped to socialize the people portrayed in this book into a past imagined as common, creating the conditions for the socially situated appropriations of its representations and taking on national identities. The term 'historical policy' denotes 'purposeful and conscious actions of widely understood authorities, leading to preservation within a society of a certain vision of the past' (Stobiecki 2008:175)[30]. As Stern points out, everyone has memories, but not everyone's memories become socially significant (2006:104). Historical policy privileges some voices and works as a framework organizing what is to be remembered on a collective level and how. In this chapter, I discuss the entanglements of historical expert knowledge, state

29 Narrative and language are treated in this book in a wider sense, encompassing symbolic, visual and spatial representations and signifiers. Historical narratives are understood as *cultural tools* (Wertsch 2000), a particular kind of *cultural texts* including all media that 'possess a particular normative and formative authority in the establishment of meaning and identity' (Assmann 2006:123). In the case of historiography, the distinctiveness is constituted by an institutionalized and professionalized mode of production and dissemination.

30 Stobiecki distinguishes two models of memory politics present in Poland since 1952. During the PRL, political history was primitive propaganda achieved thanks to the state monopoly in the field of information. In the post-communist Poland, historical policy became more a matter of dispute among various groups of interests, which try to 'impose' their version of history and the relation between the power to represent the past in the present and historical knowledge, turned into a sort of game played within the field of culture (2008:175-177).

policies and personal memories of the heroes/victims. I note the persistence of disambiguation characterizing the language used in historical and political narratives in Poland. I briefly reflect upon the contemporary Polish historiography and the impact of the newly emergent archive on its form and goals.

This book complies with what Eric Hirsch and Charles Stewart called ethnographic investigations of *historicity,* with *historicity* being understood as 'a social and performative condition rather than an objectively determinable aspect of historical descriptions' (Hirsch, Stewart 2005:262). The historical policy is explored here as an interactive performance bringing together various social actors. In this case, these are the variously positioned and institutionally allied politicians, bureaucrats and representatives of academia, people who are objects of the historical policy and society at large, with a particular focus on youth. *The cultural form of memory* emerges from the entanglement of actions taken up by these actors. Yet, it is also historically and culturally conditioned as it is shaped by particular institutions that have their own language and traditions (such as the IPN), and by well-established cultural tools – such as books, specific traditions of linguistic processing and metaphors. Throughout the book, I paint a picture of the contemporary Polish *cultural form of memory* in which historical knowledge - in both folk and professional forms - interacts with bureaucratized policies and individual modes of self-construction, especially in the cases of those personally involved in memory politics as objects. Historical texts function in post-communist Poland as cultural tools used for defining the self and evoking a sense of national 'groupness'. They constitute a legitimate technology of objectification of the past, usable in the process of self-understanding and self-representation. Since the foundation of the IPN, the files prepared by the functionaries of the regime and historical works based on these particular sources have become important components of the memory work undertaken by the people described in this book. The files and the historical texts based on them are treated in this work as cultural forms used by individuals and institutions in their practices of defining and morally evaluating the past and fabricating national identities.

Disambiguated language

White argues that the oppositions constitute a frame for creating and negotiating national identities in the making (White 2000:501). Kattago wrote, in regard to the contemporary memory discourse in the Baltic States, that 'Balts are often cast as "victims" of communist occupation and Russian-speakers as "occupiers"' and that 'the past quickly becomes politicized and polarized'. She argues that such disambiguated language is a hallmark of 'East and West narratives

about the war and the ideological division of Europe'(2013:99). An omnipresent framework of us vs. them (*my* vs. *oni*) is a deeply-rooted conceptual metaphor determining the ways in which Poles talk and think about communism and now. This framework organizes their actions, utterances and institutionalized interactions. The metaphor I am talking about can be traced back to such polarizations as occupier vs. nation (*okupant* vs. *naród*), and authority vs. society (*władza* vs. *społeczeństwo*), which has recently been transformed into communists and informers vs. us - indicating the anti-communists, who did not betray (*komuniści* and *kapusie* vs. *my*) - or *lustrators* vs. *antilustrators*. Śpiewak, in his work on Polish memory after communism, analyzes the debate about communism and its legacy that has been taking place in the public sphere since the 1990s. He talks about "two languages of transformation", two disambiguated "political languages" which emerged in regard to a widely understood lustration - one associated with the conservative right, the other with the left and liberal intellectuals. The conservative rhetoric, very similar to that used by the Law and Justice Party during my fieldwork, implied that "the communist evil did not disappear" but is still around and is even more dangerous because it is camouflaged. The nomenklatura, the security officers and their informants, successfully changed political power into economic power and achieved cultural hegemony thanks to intellectual elites who have helped mystify the new face of the well-known evil (2005:104-105). This anti-communist rhetoric is characterized by suspicion and distrust (Śpiewak 2005:105). Those at the other end of the spectrum, i.e. the *anti-lustrators*, claim that the *lustrators* are destabilizing the country and acting against democracy. They are xenophobic fanatics who wish to take revenge. The *anti-lustrators* see themselves, on the other hand, as open, critical, independent, meeting European standards, ready to forgive and exclusively correct (Śpiewak 2005:150-160).

A rhetoric of polarization is often adopted in contemporary historical writing too, which predominantly reminds us of what Istvan Rév (2005) noted as typical of Central and Eastern Post-communist Europe - the 'history of bad times'. Let us think through this fragment:

> The history of the communist security apparatus can be perceived from two points of view. On the one hand, it is a history of crime, terror, betrayal and human meanness. […] On the other hand, state security files document cases of consummate heroism; they contain the history of ordinary people who, in the name of fundamental values, were ready to sacrifice a great deal, sometimes even their lives (K. Persak and Ł. Kamiński 2005:8).

This section comes from an introduction by the historians of the IPN to the *Handbook of the Communist Security Apparatuses in East Central Europe 1944-1989*. In typically morally-loaded language, obviously negative features are be-

ing ascribed to one (communist) side, while positive ones are ascribed to the other (anti-communist). It seems to me that, in a social situation emerging from a period of large and small humiliations, abuses and violence, it is particularly difficult to refrain from such moralistic and divisive language, which I understand as *reactive*. This is especially so when these two distinct categories and their descendants still live their everyday lives face to face in a world that continues to be shaped by economic inequalities and political asymmetries.

While reflecting on Eastern Europe and its preoccupation with memory, Tony Judt cautions that 'if victim or perpetrator or victim and occupier are the categories through which the history is written, the complexity of the past is flattened and made into a kind of moral drama harboring mis-memories and myths' (cited after Kattago 2013:100).

Big conceptual orders

While describing the Polish *cultural form of memory* it seems important to me to try to understand what makes the disambiguated language[31] used in reference to the communist past prevalent and well-rooted. In the case of Poland, both Catholicism, merged with militarized nationalism, and communism have constituted such systems of knowledge and belief that frequently used extreme conceptual forms of disambiguation. These two cultural forms constitute the main ideological systems to which Poles have been exposed. Catholic philosophy, which clearly prescribes standards of behaviour, good and evil, remains an important component of the production and legitimation of the polarized representations of the past in the present[32]. The historical contingency, by no means unique for this geography, decided upon a firm linkage between the Catholic Church and mili-

31 Although psychologists argue that some people have a greater tendency to dialoguing, some prefer to think through narratives while others categorize, categorical thinking is understood as a universal feature of human cognition. Categorical thinking is a mental process used by everyone and it helps simplify and order the immense amount of information we need to process. In this sense, there is nothing unique about polarizing and explaining the world using opposites (Bruner 1986). Importantly though, the usage of such rhetoric does not bring reconciliation. It is, rather, the usage of inclusive narrative or dialogue that leads to a mutual understanding.

32 I do not mean to generalize here. The Catholic philosophy as such is being variously utilized in the processes of 'secondary' production (de Certeau 1988) by different streams within the Catholic Church. The priests who were involved in the patriotic masses I attended with my informants constitute just one faction within the Church – a more radical and nationalistic one. There are obviously more moderate and liberal voices coexisting within this institution.

tarized nationalism in Poland. As, during WWII and its aftermath, Polish priests were involved in 'spiritual leading' of the resisting partisans, so today, the military has its chaplains, and the veterans have theirs. The fruit of such confluence will be illustrated by a chapter for which the main source of data was provided by the Catholic patriotic masses during which the merging of ideologies was put into practice. The focus on divisions as opposed to unity, a clear delineation of categories of 'us' and 'them' which endure beyond communism, are prevalent in the contemporary sermons for which the heroes/victims are the audience. The historically validated polarization has become a useful tool for establishing the position of the Church. The preaching fathers managed to interweave into the emergent Manichean picture of politics a religious component, allying themselves with the anti-communist political forces. As Kołakowski argued, 'for a number of historical reasons, religious and national identity in Poland have over a long period become almost indistinguishable' (1997:50). It has been widely believed that the 'rigidity of the Polish Catholic culture […] gave the country its power of resistance' (Kołakowski 1997:51). A large part of the current Polish political elite approaches Catholic tradition as an 'irreplaceable vehicle of cultural continuity, the expression *par excellence*, of historical national identity, and the only reliable source of moral guidance' (Kołakowski 1997:56).

The disambiguation and avoidance of polysemy was above all clearly present in the communist modes of governing. The resemblances between the Catholic religion and communism have been confusing for many. Davies (1999), for instance, argued that numerous features of the communist system can be traced back to the earlier phases of Polish history. In *God's Playground,* he wrote: 'the similarities can be traced between authoritarianism and lofty rhetoric of the Party and the traditional attitudes taken by the Catholic Church' (595). A related, yet more developed, conclusion appears in Marcin Kula's book entitled *Religion-like Communism* (2003). Kula writes in reference to the historical philosophy of communism: 'The communist history of philosophy was built around the fight of good with evil. It represented a Manichean vision and constantly used a notion of secular Devil' (2003:26). Communist propaganda loved to use sharp moralistic language, especially in reference to the past, and to delineate the 'enemy' zone. Michał Buchowski (2008) notices that communism and Catholicism functioned in a common discursive, cultural sphere, and both were relying, for their perseverance, on a magical thinking (149). These two ideologies - the national Catholicism and communism - have been persistently shaping Polish minds through minute cultural practices for decades.

Remaking of the polarization

> Unforgettable July 1944…
>
> At that time, everything was for the first time, everything was new, after 5 years of captivity, Polish again, and independent…
>
> […]
>
> In journalistic dispatches and speeches delivered by politicians there emerged a new term 'People's Poland'. On a liberated from Germans piece of Polish land a new state was being born, a new Poland… (Jadczak 1984:3).

These words, written and published in 1984, are unimaginable in 2008. More than that, they are often discredited as an outcome of the communist propaganda. As much as the exaggerated tone signals the communist line of interpretation of the past, it is worth highlighting that some people *did* appropriate such a perspective. From my conversations with people who lived through communism, I can clearly see how, for some of them, the end of WWII and a possibility of building a new state generated enthusiasm[33], and how, for many of them, it genuinely constituted a realization of a *dream of belonging,* to use Janina Bauman's term (1991). This dream tabooed the violations and wrongdoings of the regime.

In the 2000s, the written and published recollection of the early 1940s could be briefly represented by this fragment:

> For the understanding of history of ‚fixing of the People's authority', one ascertainment is pivotal, that in the process of construction of the system of power, the communists recognized as their opponent (enemy) the, entirely anticommunist, overwhelming majority of the society. They were conscious that the independent conspiracy and the forest troops were simply the most active part of the nation, enjoying an extensive support of wide circles of the Polish population. Fighting against these groups was an element of fight against the entire society – a first phase on the way towards its complete intimidation and subjugation to the imposed authority (Korkuć 2005:373).

In both cases, when we talk about the initial us vs. them (*my* vs. *oni*), we talk about the politically involved minorities, leaving behind the bulk of war-traumatized, variously structured and positioned factions within Polish society. The usage of the terms society, nation or Polishness imply an appropriation of the collective agency by both communist and post-communist political discours-

33 For instance, M. Buchowski (2008:155) classifies the communist functionaries as 'passionate believers' (org. Żarliwi Wyznawcy), 'enlightened believers' (org. Oświeceni Wyznawcy) and 'cynical believers' (org. Cyniczni Wyznawcy), arguing that the 'passionate believers' constituted the majority of the party members at the initial stage of building communism in Poland.

es. Eventually, the experience and interpretative frameworks belonging to particular politically engaged groups have been presented as if they belonged to the entire Polish society. While the official propaganda of the communist times claimed that the arrival of the Red Army on Polish soil meant liberation, and that the new state - the People's Republic of Poland - was a truly Polish and modern formation, today's historians ponder whether this liberation and seizure of power could actually be called 'colonialism', while being quite certain that it should be called violent 'occupation' (IPN conference 2005).

Emic perspective

My preoccupation with historical knowledge, for the most part, stems from my interaction with the *emic* constructions employed by the heroes/victims I met in the field. 'Being conscious of one's place in history' is a mode of being overtly present in the society I studied. Frances Pine, who walked analytically in rural and urban landscapes of Poland with those who dwell in them, expressed it in the following way: 'If you take a walk through any urban space in Poland with a local inhabitant, you will be told not only what every building and every space is *now*, but also, what it *used* to be, before the war, during the occupation, after the bombardments, during communist time' (Pine 2007:104). Agnieszka Osiecka, in her diary for Adam Michnik (2008), described her conversations with a young foreigner who was astonished by the ways in which Poles always historicized themselves, how there was always a date, a historical event to refer to, and how a personal story was always contextualized through a reference to a political episode. Osiecka herself, in her conversation with the foreigner, claimed that nesting Polish experiences in history was a natural consequence of the difficult past the nation has endured.

Even today, getting on a train at Warsaw central station, there are a father and son sitting in my compartment. Fragments of their conversations that reach me tell of an uncle who had been an anti-communist partisan and who, upon abandoning the forest in 1945, returned home to find that his wife had remarried, and that there was no life for him in the communist condition. The narrative was ordered by a usage of well-established historical definitions with which both father and son were familiar. In Pine's terms, they are 'something that everyone remembers' (Pine 2007). Such stories are nested in big events and they constitute *event-centred frames* (White 2004) which allow the two generations to orient themselves in the stream of time that remains beyond their lived experience. Despite the passage of time, small stories like this one puncture a contemporary Polish reality during the most casual of conversations. It happens in

the absence of, or, better to say, in the process of dissolution of the oppressive regime. It is now the revival and remaking of the repressed that animates the everyday talk and a search for denied identities, which, like hidden treasure, fulfil kinship pasts, calling for a *gold rush*. In a nation state such as Poland, it is mostly the strong tradition of historical texts that has provided people with a common language and historical imagery. A strong nationalist orientation and tragic life stories carried within the family since long before communism are knotted with a language of detailed historical knowledge. Individual memories are subdued by the semantic memory encapsulated in emergent collective representations, giving legitimacy to individual claims.

The fondness for historicizing could be read as a reaction to the former regime's *repression* of certain memories and facts – an attempt to rescue them from oblivion. It could be read as a reaction to the impossibility of expressing the politicized, yet very private, suffering of a group of people that was never publicly acknowledged. It could finally be read as a reaction to a lack of truthful historiography, as communist historical writing was obviously selective, jargonized and full of lies. Reflecting upon the complexities of memory embedded in the lives of Polish families during communism, Pine (2007) argued that the public/private (exposed/entrusted) dichotomy was characterized by a particularly strong elaboration of *communicative memory*[34] (Assmann 2006). Kitchen table talks in her ethnographic descriptions index resistance to the strictly delimited lines of public expression within which so little could have been articulated. In this view of memory, the tandem of an oppressive type of historical narrative, which was produced under the auspices of the state during communism, and the world of elaborated everyday stories about the past[35] necessarily fed each other, producing an effect of *hidden dialogicality* (Tulviste, Wertsch 1994). This book is concerned with a condition in which the hidden comes into the daylight, and those who expressed resistance to the silencing of their memories in the public sphere, possibly in a form of communicative memory, now gained the possibility of representing their experience through the authorized channels. The memories of their experience have become canonized, made available to the public and integrated into the now legitimated framework. A bridge was established 'between "loose" or personal memories and "emblematic" frameworks that im-

34 Communicative memory is a term coined by I. Assmann to describe the social aspect of individual memory, which grows out of interactions between people. These imply emotionality, fragmentation and randomness (Assmann 2006:3).

35 "Kitchen table talks" constituted but one space where repressed meanings could have been articulated. Church was another such space, and political cabaret was another.

part meaning and assimilate personal remembrance into collective remembrance' (Stern 2006:1).

Symbolic capital

Historians constitute a part of the production side of the memory politics (the IPN historians more directly, others in indirect ways) and, as such, they help construct a framework that works towards ordering of memories, particularly of those who have no lived experience of the past in question. Historical representations are also used as a source for legitimating one's claims to a particular truth or identity, especially if history writing deals with those who are still alive[36]. Ethnographic examples presented in this manuscript will illustrate a motif of *secondary production*[37] hidden in the process of utilization' (de Certeau 1988: Xiii) of the historical representations as practised by those who lived through communism and who appeared in historical writings as agents. When historians turn towards life stories, they enable the entanglement of 'personal stories', such as those of the heroes/victims, into collective myths, giving the historical or official narrative an emotionally loaded dimension (White 1999). Among those heroes/victims whose stories were being deducted and integrated into historical works depicting national resistance and suffering, historical representations gained new meanings brought alive in the course of social practice focused on production and maintenance of identities, alliances and versions negotiated away from the desk spaces arranged by historians. Their stories and vignettes came back to them in a new collectivized form with which they interact. The emergent politicized narrative provoked, in people treated by the historical writings as agents of history, further elaborations concerning the place of the self in history, as well as animated emotions and feelings about the past and present selves, revealing new possibilities of representing oneself in front of others (see chapter five).

However, the heroes/victims have also been authors of the amateur historical texts. A strong tradition of oral transmission of personal historicized experience, repressive memory politics of the communist regime and the dreadful knowledge of repressions have been transformed into a need felt by the heroes/victims and their families to publish their memoirs, their research, and their testimonies (e.g.: Krasiński 1996; anonymous source 2003; Olszewski 2003;

36 This ethnography concerns people who became objects of historical inquiry while alive.

37 Secondary production is a term coined by Michel de Certeau to point out the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilization (1988).

Pietras, Prandota 2002). This need was driven by an institutionally-fostered imagery of suffering heroes envisaged as a treasure of the Polish nation – a treasure that was assassinated by the Soviets and communists, and that has constituted the only proper and truthful legacy of Poles. The official status of such imagery made people feel secure enough to pursue the publishing of personal narratives. The people actively engaged in the workings of the Association await every opportunity to voice their stories. They have them smoothened. They await journalists, researchers, state officials and youth. Yet, they will give their narratives only when they feel unchallenged and safe. This is their condition.

Recognizable in other ethnographic examples (Kirmayer 1996), the global trend is now towards the empowerment of the victims, giving space for their voices and the institutionalizing of their position. The notion of collective recovery implies building a context for retelling, understood as a healing process (Das et al. 2001). It seems that incorporating life stories and testimonies into grand historical narratives is a part of this political process. Such globally emerging themes take on a particularly local face in Poland. For most of the people involved in the anti-communist activities during the Stalinist period and later, some of whom I met during this fieldwork, the declared urgency was not about individual recovery; it was about rescuing the national memory and freezing it in historical writings and a monumentalized landscape. The main declared intention was centred on shaping the consciousness of and giving direction to the future generations. People who resisted communism in various forms are taken as models of patriotism, essential in a global world where a levelling sameness consumes national sentiments. Historical writing is imagined as a particularly crucial component of this project of rescuing the nation's past from oblivion, and shaping the minds of future generations[38]. The heroes/victims, their presence or their emotive narratives give an allure of real life into dry historical accounts given to today's youth.

On the other hand, the historical writings provide the heroes/victims with a conceptual apparatus and interpretative frames for dealing with the past in which they lived. In fact, for the heroes/victims, historical writing, a part of the infrastructure of memory, became a peculiar agent of transformation from communism towards democracy, from 'I' situated in the communist times, to 'I' living after communism, as it has assimilated the past into the present through a

38 In cases in geographical proximity, such as Ukraine, but, as L. Zaszkilniak argues, it is a typical process for all post-Soviet space, historiography underwent a process of "nationalization" or ethnization. It moved from researching what were forbidden subjects to the creation of great national narratives legitimizing national and state independence (Zaszkilniak 2008:28).

regular linguistic processing, giving it a legitimacy and an allure of objectivity *[...]* 'historical time again and again reproduces the tension between society and its transformation, on the one hand, and its linguistic processing and assimilation, on the other' (Koselleck 2002:24). As linguistic processing and conceptual frameworks are never socially and politically neutral, so history writing in the post-communist Poland is sensitive to complicated networks of dependency, ideology and power. As a reaction to years of silencing, the historical representations aspire to 'give voice', to 'reveal the truth' and, sometimes, to give a final moral judgement on communism. As the Law and Justice Party puts it: 'The memory of those who fought for freedom and independence of Poland strengthens our obligation to formation of the public life in accordance with the imperatives of truth and justice' (*Declaration "Memory and Responsibility"*). The quote illustrates a strong urge felt by some of the more conservative Polish historians and politicians to 'disclose' and represent the past in the name of the democratic future, which is directed by certain national and patriotic values.

Axiologisation of historical discourse

The problems with historical research on communism in Poland that relies on the security files, Krzysztof Brzechczyn argues,

> do not result from any defects of the sources themselves or the shortcomings of the methodology of history, they stem from institutional and sociological factors – giving in to the social demands for fast presentation of the results of modern history analyses, as well as axiologisation of historiographical discourse, which leads to the slackening of methodological reliability standards (Brzechczyn 2012:77).

The events of 1989 lifted the taboos, and the research into hitherto forbidden areas of history mushroomed. The work has often been undertaken by the victims themselves, by their family members[39] or by people who believed that the heroes/victims' voices should surface and that their deeds should be commemorated. Since the heroes/victims are treated as the most valuable members of society, who ought to be honoured after years of humiliation and repression, they are the ones whose voice is persistently recorded and disseminated. Meanwhile,

39 During a historical conference, an IPN historian said, 'as my father, who was an AK soldier…'. Another historian mentioned to me: 'my uncle was in the underground'. The predominant sensation, which partially stems from the experience of the communist attempt at annihilation of persons and their stories, and partially from a kinship obligation felt by the relatives of those who were repressed, is that such knowledge is extremely fragile and should be taken care of particularly well. Importantly, there are counter-examples of historians working for the IPN who have no anti-communist family history.

the voice of the 'perpetrators' is absent. The 'communists' are being excluded from the representational realm and formed into 'the Other'. Much of historical research concerning communism in Poland is constituted by an overtly politicized narrative, a narrative concerned with the anti-communist activists - whose stories are incorporated into historical texts as testimonies and that serve as *allegories of collectivity* (White 2000) - and those who hunted them and whose voice is absent. Certainly, the perpetrators of repression would not be easy interlocutors in today's Poland; yet, as this manuscript shows, their participation is not out of the question. However, since a lot of serious historical research takes place in the Institute that acts simultaneously as a prosecution commission for the communist crimes, the possibility of having IPN-led research based on oral history recorded among the officers of the security apparatus loses its grounds because of this simple structural condition. Hence, the research on the state security authorities, with a few exceptions[40], remains dry. The data derived from the files allow one to draw tables, use statistics, include discreditable quotes from the files, and build an image of a 'statistical investigative officer' (e.g. Poleszak 2005). As a rule, the middle-ranking state security officers are considered 'liars' whose testimonies are 'charged with an error', as they wish to avoid punishment for the wrongdoings committed (personal communication with the IPN historians).

Brzechczyn explains that the public discussion on historical policy boosted the social demand for the history of communism, which commemorates acts of resistance and shows the nature of the repressive state (2012: 75). With particular regard to the works of the historians employed in the IPN, Communist Poland is researched in large part through reliance on the files prepared by the communist security services[41], and the vast amount of works are prepared as advertisements for commemoration of civic protests and exposure of violent acts performed by the communist state against society. The commemorative function of historical texts meant that they became evaluative and selective. Many historical representations are prepared in the IPN in response to social demand and are formed along the lines of the project of educating in the spirit of patriotism.

40 See Z. Nawrocki, 2004, „Wspomnienia Jana Gorlińskiego, pierwszego szefa PUBP w Mielcu" (wrzesień 1944-maj 1945), in: „ARwPL" 1(1) or F. Musiał, 2005, „Rehabilitacje – wspomnienia Józefa Waszkiewicza, sędziego NSW", in: „ARwPL" 1(2).

41 The argument about the credibility of the files is often taken up both in the public discourse and in the academic discussions among historians. In public, *the anti-lustrators* repeatedly argued that the files were numerously destroyed and are impossible to reconstruct, are incomplete, and in fact the most serious co-operators were not evidenced; hence, these documents are of little use in reconstructing the communist past (Śpiewak 2005:150). From the perspective of historians, the debate is ongoing.

Brzechczyn calls this phenomenon *axiologisation of historical discourse* and sees it as a cause of the loosening of the standards of reliability of historical research (Brzechczyn 2012: 75).

The IPN sucked in a number of qualified and gifted contemporary historians, offering them strikingly better conditions of work than any history department at any Polish state university would have done[42]. The position of a historian in the Public Education Office of the IPN is twofold. People working there oscillate between roles as researchers and as bureaucrats. They describe working there by using a 'split personality' (*rozdwojenie jaźni*) metaphor. This concept refers to working in two orders: administration – ruled by command; and research – guided by academic curiosity and rigour. The administrative component grants 'more or less formal pressures'. This 'pressure from the world of politics' is perceived as a 'threat to an autonomous position of research', although it is accepted as unavoidable. The historians are able to realize their independent projects but also work on prescribed ones. However, what they prepare for the wider public is not exactly what they agree with. Nevertheless, the tools, the possibility of realizing a historian's craft in a comfortable milieu, make up for that. The majority of the IPN research and educational projects are determined centrally on the basis of a so-called 'social demand'[43]. Even though, theoretically, individual projects are approved with a large autonomous element, there may be little time left for their realization[44].

As the 13th of December (the day when martial law was introduced by General Wojciech Jaruzelski in 1981) approached, a decision-maker in the IPN decided that there was a 'social demand' for teaching the nation that:

> History forms our identity. Out of our most recent history, no event has influenced the contemporary history more than the martial law. The experience of the wickedness of the communist authorities, and an incredibly wide resistance to the dictatorship is still alive (The IPN leaflet).

Like Pearl Harbour or 9/11 from Geoffrey White's accounts, martial law in this case was constructed as an *event-centred frame*, a dramaturgical mode of representation. Such frames provide 'a lens that focuses storytelling on moments of violence and on the human dramas that unfolded around them' (White 2004:296). They are intended to build a sense of national community and teach

42 By better working conditions, I mean higher salaries, privileged access to the files, good access to computers and books, and an easier career advancement scheme.

43 The notion of social demand for the history of communism is a topic worthy of further exploration and explanation.

44 I base these conclusions on a number of interviews with the IPN employees conducted by me in one of the local branches of this Institution.

its legacy. This leaflet is an example of ways in which historical expert knowledge is subdued for the sake of educational projects fostering specific attitudes and ways of understanding the past. As Brzechczyn puts it, 'the IPN cannot resist such [social – AWM] demand', and goes on to produce en masse historical texts focused on the newly defined key dates in Polish history.

It is unquestionable, however, as noticed by Filip Musiał, whether the availability of the new archive allows for a crucial expansion of knowledge about the communist past in Poland (2006:7). In fact, according to him, any account of the history of communism in Poland would be partial were the material gathered by the apparatus of repression to be omitted (Musiał 2006:62). When the archive was opened, it was such a novelty that many Polish historians were convinced that it would be enough to use these sources to 'cause a historical revolution' (Brzechczyn 2012:75). The sources were treated uncritically and without enough insight. Musiał made an important point while discussing the value of the security files as historical records, noting that the knowledge that can be derived from these documents cannot be treated as a full and credible image of the People's Republic of Poland. It should be borne in mind that the files allow one to reconstruct life under the People's Republic of Poland from a single perspective, that of the security apparatus (Musiał 2006:56-57). I would add that this is a perspective of the institution, not of individual functionaries. The files, Musiał argues further, document the state of knowledge of the security services and should not be treated as a representation or a key for understanding events or phenomena, as they do not reflect the social complexity of events (Musiał 2006:57). Brzechczyn sets out a clear defence of the archive and the research based on the files, provided that the research is based on proper historical methodology and a knowledge of the language of the security files. For him, the security files and the IPN archive are like any other records and archives. What is new is the content, which opens up new windows for historical interpretation of the communist past. This archive has its own language and logic, which needs to be learned. One of the main tasks that emerged for historians after the creation of the IPN was to understand it, as well as to build the heuristic rules for interpreting the material gathered in the cellars of the IPN. This process is on-going.

Responsibility to educate

Stobiecki shows how the circle of Polish historians is divided on the historians' role in contemporary society. One perspective criticizes history's political engagement and aspires to the independence and objectivity of the professionals. The other, and this approach seems to have been taken up by the historians

working for the IPN, treats history writing as a mission, an excellent tool for educating society (Stobiecki 2008:188). 'Shall we consider the underground state as a monument only, or rather as an experience which is still alive in Polish consciousness, and finally, whether this legacy could be helpful in the process of constructing the pro-state attitudes?' – asked one of the historians from the IPN during a conference which took place in Lublin (Wnuk 2002:46). The answer that followed unveils how a group of prominent historians, due to their values and feelings concerning national history, fits the scheme of the current memory politics. 'No nation shall reject what can be learned from the past. The history of the underground state is a particularly rich material for educating, both in national and in civic terms. […] It is true that the youth have their own problems and fascinations […] yet, it does not relieve us of a responsibility to educate' (Marszalec 2002:47). Hence, the Public Educational Office has created a number of educational projects targeting Polish youth. It prepares educational portfolios, i.e. teaching aids for schools, which are delivered free of charge. It runs historical competitions for pupils. It organizes meetings with witnesses of history. It organizes interactive lessons on the topic of life in the PRL. It also measures, through quantitative methods, the historical awareness of Polish youth. Politicians and journalists express alarm that the level of 'historical consciousness' is very low among young Poles. In 2008, on the anniversary of one of the main anti-government demonstrations, which took place in March 1968, 87 per cent of young Polish patriots hadn't a clue what to associate the date with (Gazeta Wyborcza 5.3.2008). Such a state of affairs is a challenge for those historians who feel their profession obliges them to make a pedagogical effort.

Traditionally, one of the main institutional channels for shaping young generations' understanding of the past has been the schooling system and textbooks. The history textbooks - 'a necessary simplification of history', as one of the IPN historians puts it - are structured in such a way as to underline a continuity of the present with the pre-communist history of 'the nation', which suffered frequent partitions, mostly from the German and Russian sides in the 18th century. Often, the aim is to represent communism as 'foreign', 'forced' and 'the other'. An exemplary history textbook for gymnasia (Wendt 2007) I came across during my fieldwork was filled with the moralistic disambiguated discourse. The narrative was constructed as if Polish society comprised communists (led by Moscow) and the heroic anti-communists (the true Poles). The rest of society was depicted as a victim of terror and bad policies. More generally, the given representation of communist Poland was built around violations, suffering, crises, and instances of national resistance. The lived memory gradually dissolves, and the knowledge of the past among the post-communist generations is being con-

structed in a way clearly detached from a lived experience or, rather, attached to a particular sort of lived experience, in the name of building a new patriot[45].

A dialogic process

James Wertsch (2000), who compared the production side and the narrative content of the Soviet and post-soviet Russian history textbooks, argues in favour of viewing these variously-positioned official historical accounts as emergent through a dialogic process, with the later ones constituting a response to the previous ones. A legendary Polish samizdat publication, written as a reaction to the strict communist censorship, was entitled "What is Missing from the History Textbooks". It was re-published in 1991. The editor's introductory words, 'in the free Poland – the Poland, in which the white stains produced by the communist system must be filled out' (Grochulski, Kucharski, Herman 1991: 23), suggest that the dialogical process referred to by Wertsch may have taken place in my ethnographic context too. […] In the case of Russia, 'Many passages of the new history textbook seem to be so focused on countermanding what are considered to be the lies of Soviet history that there is no room for the appearance of new information from archives, eye witnesses, and so forth. The process is one of producing new narratives to respond to old ones' (Wertsch 2000). The question of whether this may also be the case in Poland and the role possibly played by the IPN in such a process requires a more thorough study. The historical narrative contained in communist and post-communist textbooks seems to have a feature of a genre that, as Bakhtin would put it, should be understood as derived from a history of society and language and determined by the perception of the addressee (1994[1981]). A history textbook used by my nephew is not very different thematically and compositionally from the books from which his father learned. The narrative version of big structures moved by politically engaged agents remains a predominant style of writing. It acknowledges neither the Annales School nor the emergence of Memory in historical discourse (Klein 2000). The main difference is neither stylistic nor structural, although the new historical writing is clearly devoid of communist ideological jargon. What dif-

45 The Ministry of Education along with the Ministry of National Defence under the Law and Justice government prepared a project promoting 'new patriotism', which aimed at making the traditional patriotic values more accessible and applicable to the contemporary reality of Polish youth. Moreover, the IPN has been cooperating with the Ministry of Education on a project in which children learn about the spaces of torture and repressions by bodily experience of specific reconstructed spaces, as well as by the tasks of acquiring information about the past from the 'living sources' - that is a specific hero/victim - given to individual pupils.

ferentiates them is the structuring of alterity and the ascription of recognition, which happens in a dialogue with the previous mode of structuring.

Chapter Two
The Mediating Role of the State in a Social Practice of Acquiring a Hero/Victim Subject Position

Performing a hero/victim sentiment

People who were repressed by the communist regime in Poland, or who experienced what they interpreted as political repression under the communist regime, find culturally informed ways to perform a hero/victim role, identity or sentiment in their social proximity. This may be in the form of a grandmother telling heart-warming stories to her grandson. It may be in a flower silently brought to a recently unveiled monument site commemorating anti-communist partisans by an old woman for her lover who, through his heroism, extended his victimhood over her life after his death. It may be through the annoyance felt by an ex-blue-collar worker who, despite his wife asking him not to, went on strike in the 1970s and 1980s. Now, watching the evening news and seeing another high-ranking *Solidarity* activist, who has just escaped the consequences of a corruption scandal, he glances immediately at a pile of unpaid bills stuck in a box next to the television set and feels a sense of injustice. It may be in the recollection of a passer-by who, in the winter of 1981, was dragging home a Christmas tree when he saw two militia men beating up a teenager; intuitively, he turned back to take a side street but, a day later, he wrote on a wall 'fuck the militia'. To this day, the wall and the street evoke in him a sense of humiliation. Among these types, there are groups of people who take up such roles, identities and accompanying sentiments regularly through well-established, spatially-situated collective practices. They are named and legitimized by the state as anti-communist heroes/victims. For them, an identity of a hero/victim is not merely based on sentiments evoked in everyday life. They hold similar experiences that are classifiable and objectifiable in the language and materiality of the state form. In this chapter, I introduce the Association in which I based my fieldwork and explain the ways in which the subjectivities of the people engaged in its workings have altered as a consequence of their commitment to this form of civic activity.

The Association

The Association of Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Period in Marianowice (*Związek Więźniów Politycznych Okresu Komunistycznego w Marianowicach*) came into being in the 1990s through the initiative of a few people previously engaged in the workings of the Association of Former Political Prisoners of Marianowice's Tower. The emergent Association was a unique event; yet, the repertoire for its existence was already present in the previous associational form, from which the initiators decided to distinguish themselves. The previous, still existent, Association was established in 1969, bringing together victims of Nazi crimes committed in Marianowice's tower. Legitimized by the structures of the communist state, the Association played its role in memory politics, working towards the inscription of Nazi atrocities into Marianowice's commemorative landscape. Such inscriptions served to legitimize in turn the communist version of the 'liberation' of Poland from the occupying and enslaving Germans. With the collapse of the communist regime, this frame became openly challenged. The memory politics of the communist era became demystified, and the suppressed voices of those who had been disgraced by the regime started to surface. The victims of Nazi atrocities became incorporated into a larger framework of the Polish nation's long suffering caused by foreign oppressions. When the communist regime collapsed, the new taxonomy was gradually generated and a new official category of anti-communist hero/victim could be performed in the public realm under the auspices of the state.

The idea of singling out the political prisoners of the communist period in a separate Association was announced in 1990, during a meeting of the Association of the Former Political Prisoners of the Tower. The initiators originally wanted to organize a Marianowice branch of an already established Central Association of the Former Political Prisoners of the Stalinist Period; however, there was dissent about the naming of the Association and the scope of inclusion. People from the Central Association did not want to grant membership to the Marianowice candidates for heroes/victims who were repressed by the communist state agents due to their participation in a religious event that had taken place in a village near Marianowice in the early 1950s. The Marianowice initiators, in contrast to the heroes/victims from the Central Association, believed that people repressed for religious reasons should have been recognized as political prisoners despite the fact that they were not clearly involved in the anti-communist struggle. This difference in perspectives on naming and defining led to the establishing of an independent Association in Marianowice. In 1991, preceded by a Catholic mass held in a garrison church, the first convention of the Association assembled in a chamber of a local authority building. Eventually, a

broad conception of membership was forced through. The Marianowice people decided they should not confine themselves to the Stalinist period but should approach the communist regime as a whole instead. After all, 'the communist repressions had ended only when the new Poland had been born – in 1989', one of the Association members explained to me. As a result, they distinguish among themselves several groups of people:

- partisans involved in anti-Nazi and two anti-communist waves of conspiracy, and the civil population who supported their struggle in the 1940s and 1950s,
- members of independence youth groups active in the 1950s,
- people repressed for their religious beliefs,
- prisoners of gulags in Soviet Russia in the 1940s and 1950s,
- internees during martial law in the 1980s.

Currently steadily decreasing, the membership reached its peak of 965 in the 1990s. At the initial stage of functioning, its most important task involved acquiring and verifying members who, for the most part, wanted to join the Association in order to gain veteran's entitlements, including war veteran disability pensions, or to be recognized with a military rank. According to an already established mechanism, the Association operated as a go-between, mediating and carrying out the authentication procedures linking individuals with tangible forms of the state. Out of nearly a thousand people, only a handful has been truly engaged in the workings of the Association. This fieldwork was conducted mostly among those involved in the associational meetings on a weekly basis. I consider this group to amount to approximately twenty-five people. These are members of the Association board, predominantly men aged 60-90, who perform ascribed functions, and those who regularly visit the place, offering their help and involvement.

My fieldwork coincided with a term during which the strongest representation on the board consisted of a group of people who used to conspire together in their youth – a group of men in their 70s who lived their adolescent years in one rural area near Marianowice and who travelled to schools in the city. This group clearly gave a shape to this research. Apart from this cluster, each Christmas and Easter, up to one hundred members gather at meetings organized by the board, which take place in a local authority building. Such meetings always include a priest, who gives a sermon before the supper starts. Some of these one hundred occasionally join patriotic trips organized on the occasion of anniversaries, the unveiling of monuments and official rituals. The remaining members should be considered a dormant group of heroes/victims, who pay their membership fees and derive benefits from their membership of the Association but who

do not participate in the social production of a *habitus* of a hero/victim in a strictly cultural sense.

Verification practices, acquisition practices

> My dress and the photograph are a tiny part of a grand ceremony of affirmation, of commitment to a larger identity: a sense of national belonging.
>
> From *Family Secrets. Acts of Memory and Imagination* by Annette Kuhn

Marilyn Strathern pointed out that 'people objectify themselves to themselves in innumerable ways, but must always do so through assuming a specific form' (Strathern 1990:26). The heroes/victims at the outset of their associational involvement had to work out the ways of objectifying themselves. These ways acquired a specific form through their reliance on bureaucratic modes of representation controlled by the state. Bringing the Association to life was just the first step in a dense network of objectification processes the heroes/victims have been performing since the 1990s. The members of the Association appointed from among their number a verification commission (*Komisja Weryfikacyjna*), which decides whether to grant a membership or reject an application. The commission established a couple of genres suitable for the application procedure. A complete application included a declaration (*deklaracja członkowska*), a life sketch (*życiorys*), an informational card (*karta informacyjna*) and necessary documents (*dokumentacja*). While a declaration is a short piece of paper on which a person declares that he or she wishes to become a member (an element of conscious and voluntary decision), other papers are more elaborate.

In a life sketch, people focus selectively on those facts from their lives that might confirm them as heroes/victims. The plots of their life stories are centred on experiences of communist repression. An exemplary life sketch written by Józef will help illustrate this:

> I was born on the 6th of July 1934 in Potok. I graduated from a primary school (7grades) in Mlyn and I started a vocational training in Tarok, where I was arrested on the 20th of August 1954. I was under investigation for five months. After the investigation I was judged in a Marianowice court and, as an enemy of the People's Republic of Poland, I was sent to Silesia to work in a mine. After serving my sentence, I came back home and there a call-up was already waiting for me. After two days of being home, I was taken by a military escort to Silesia to another mine where I worked for two years as a soldier. In 1957, after I came back home, I wanted to finish the school but, as an enemy of communism, I was not allowed to. Caught in a deadlock, I finished a course for drivers, where I worked till I retired in 1982.

Even though the frame is context-dependent, it does not arise spontaneously. Normally, people tell each other what a life sketch should look like and how to fill out the documents. To a certain extent, therefore, the application procedure should be understood as an interactive endeavour through which people's orientation towards prescribed practices of storytelling is achieved. The projection of the subject outwards is shaped by the interaction with others, who offer a frame and a genre. Such an arrangement generates a sense of community through acknowledgment of commonality of experience and similarity of life stories. The rules of authorization imposed by the grouping have entailed the ascription of an iconic life story into the state-certified practices. By structuring a life story around individual encounters with the oppressive state form, a subject is nested in a politicized context, which provides him/her with meaning. At the same time, the processes of objectification applied by the Association support a move towards a new moral condition and legitimize a new democratic and national order. As such, the iconic life stories and artefacts, which are produced in the process of verification and authentication of individual membership, constitute instruments through which the past is being socially ordered and classified[46]. The state institutions, which have the final word in granting the privileges and symbolic acts of recognition, constitute a crucial partner in this process. It is not only the story itself but also the act of giving a story to the associational archive, and obtaining status and privileges from the state in response to this gift that normalizes and naturalizes the state form and the political actions of the heroes/victims. The heroes/victims, through the actions performed within the framework of the Association, simultaneously confer legitimacy on the post-communist state and derive recognition from it.

The genre of a life sketch was more open-ended, in the extent to which it allowed the expression of 'individual' ways of understanding the hero/victim aspects of one's story, than other documents. As the life sketch could be used to display a hero/victim perspective in a less prescribed way, in the informational card the board delimited more clearly what kind of a person it imagined as a potential member by posing specific questions that restricted the applicants to more rigid conditions of story-telling. This form was one of the first documents

46 V. Das, A. Kleinman noted that 'stories provide a cultural shape that has the potential to naturalize, normalize, and thereby order experience in terms of societal processes of social control' (2001:21). In fact, they argue for all cultural representations to have the potential to naturalize and order experience. This argument seems particularly relevant when applied to those cultural representations that deal with the past, the memories of which are sensitive to social modes of ordering. When the past becomes a political resource, implying that actors have access to state institutions, the channels for controlling the representations of it, and hence, the memories of it, expand.

the initiators of the Association invented collectively in order to foster their work. After the four first points, requiring name, date and place of birth, parents' names, and address, a fifth point opened a textual space of interrogation into the kernel of being the kind of hero/victim who might become a member of the Association. The questions started with date and place of arrest. After that insight, there were questions on the following: a date of release, a place of interrogation, duration of interrogation, a sentence ('what court, which penal code and articles'), a date when the sentence was announced and 'how many years' were specified in the sentence, names of detention centres and camps in which one was kept, date and basis of release, whether the sentence was overruled, membership of clandestine organizations, details of operation, rank and duties in the clandestine organizations and, finally, a current military rank[47]. These questions should be understood as a collective mode of shaping the identity of an anti-communist hero/victim of political repression. Such identity is inscribed into specific places and practices of state terror, which the applicant enumerates while filling out the informational card. The associational practice of authentication is organized around the 'state-centred categories and narratives' (Coronil, Skurski 2006:2) such as official sentences, institutionalized violence, or interrogation protocols. These categories and narrative genres structure the collective modes of remembering violence and understanding the self. The state-form impacts upon the organization of meanings ascribed to past violence and, through its mediating influence on forms of representation, it extends the nationalist framework over the process of collectivized remembering of suffering. With such a move, it turns personal experience into a publicly potent identity. In this sense, the past violence turns into a mediated representational form, not only vis-à-vis an uninvolved audience, but also in relation to those who experienced that violence[48]. The modes into which the past experiences of political violence are being ordered socially in the present index ways in which the secular state (both as a concept and as a practice) performs power over individual self-schemata. However, it is equally important to note that these are individual heroes/victims who actively participate in the reproduction of these constitutive structures of power. The post-communist state-form became a condition within

47 The state currently recognizes the heroes/victims by giving them military ranks. For many of the heroes/victims, this form of recognition is a fulfilment of a dream they have carried since childhood – that of becoming a full-blooded soldier of the Polish nation.

48 Coronil and Skurski underline the mediated aspect of violence in its aftermath. They claim that the difficult past 'is named, recognized and [re]experienced in terms of authorizing concepts' (Coronil and Skurski 2006:4). Such authorizing concepts disseminated through institutional channels index structures of power.

which heroes/victims from the Association have been able to perform their identities.

Theoretically, storytellers and their collaborators are no longer approached as capable of conveying their experiences in an authentic and unmediated form (Scott 1995). Analytically, attention is more frequently given to *diverse authenticities* constituted by organizational and institutional contexts as relevant for achieving the coherence of one's story (Gubrium, Holstein 1998). Narrative is being understood as a situated practice - *a narrative practice* (Gubrium, Holstein 1998) - implying simultaneously 'the activities of storytelling, the resources used to tell stories, and the auspices under which stories are told' (Gubrium, Holstein 1998:164). The experience of political violence and humiliation constituted a common experiential pool for those people who applied for membership of the Association. The Association provided them with the auspices and tools for telling their stories in the form of a life sketch. The membership of the Association imposed a genre typical of previous associational forms, characterized by a specific framework of storytelling, which focused on the experience of political violence and humiliation in an event-centred form. The practical circumstances of wanting to become a member have dictated a compliance and orientation towards a specific *composition* of a story dependent on *situated interpretative demands* (Gubrium, Holstein 1998:166).

The shape and workings of the Association depend on a handful of people who meet regularly. Through the series of interactions within the group and with the external structures of state, science, religion and the wider public, definitions of an association and a hero/victim have been achieved, and the interaction of the grouping is now oriented towards the maintenance of this definition and its adjustment, when new information comes to light[49]. In Erving Goffman's terms, the Association could be called 'a team', i.e. a set of individuals who co-operate in order to achieve a definition of a common situation and who work towards the maintenance of this definition (Goffman 1958:64). The Association in Marianowice may also be regarded as an *emotive institution*[50], which has

49 Machteld Venken's study on Polish veteran organizations in Belgium serves here as an interesting comparison as it focuses on migrant memories and ways in which the practices organized around the past cement the veteran identities, help build a coherent image of a group, and successfully incorporate it in a context of a receiving country (Venken 2012).

49 White, analyzing the *Arizona* Memorial commemorating Pearl Harbour, focuses on the Pearl Harbour survivors' discourse performed in the context of memorial. He argues that survivors' stories and larger narratives of nation co-constitute each other through an emotive performance of survivors' narratives, hence giving the institution an emotive undertone (1999).

worked towards the schematization of an affective and cognitive understanding of history and identity. This schematization has been achieved through *routinization of context* (White 1999:527) established through interaction and by the usage of a stable repertoire of semiotic resources performable in regular, authorized contexts. The affective and cognitive understanding of the past gained by the heroes/victims is linked to the state-form and its manifestations. One such potent manifestation is constituted by the security files taken over by the IPN after the collapse of the regime.

Ambiguous location and empowering files

In fact, the anti-communist heroes/victims perform their identity in the space between two state-forms and their material objectifications - the communist one and the democratic one. This position is inherently ambiguous, as it requires the heroes/victims to simultaneously deny the lawfulness of the communist form and derive legitimacy from its material remnants. On the other hand, the heroes/victims rely on the democratic state that objectifies them, while they simultaneously foster its existence. The communist state-form is the alterity through which a new state-form has been built. The heroes/victims provide a necessary linkage enabling a new state-form to define its predecessor in moral terms.

In my ethnographic example, it is a form of associational structure, a kind of societal justice, which works towards cementing and freezing the individuated articulation about the past in politicized genres and rhetoric. This authoritative channel pulls the security files into the legitimizing repertoire, as they are used to certify violent experiences. Members of the Association perform politicized practices in a search for internal integrity and a sense of moral order. Paradoxically, in this process, my informants, instead of distancing themselves from the language of the security files, are being tied to them in a search for the legitimacy of their hero/victim status[51].

50 An interesting theme emerges in the literature concerning the cultural and social modes of interaction with the communist secret services' archives. V. Skultans, in her recent work on interaction between her Latvian informants and their KGB files, claims that the language of the files and the language of informants belong to different orders of purpose and allegiance. 'The allegiance of the language recorded in the archive is to social structures and institutions'; that of' [her] 'informants is to preserving a sense of moral and personal integrity' (Skultans 2001:323). Skultans interviewed her informants in relation to the KGB files collected about them. She discovered a need in her informants for challenging the files, which bore no resemblance to the way people recollected their experiences. The challenge to the files was performed through personal narrative,

People who wish to gain a hero/victim status have to legitimize themselves by delivering copies of official documents certifying the act(s) of repression committed against them. These would include a sentence pronounced by a communist court (or alternatively, if a sentence was not given, an attestation issued by the court), the contemporary security office (UOP), or the IPN, concerning the existence of one's UB/SB files along with the protocols of interrogation. Hence, in fact, the security files have become established as a source of legitimation for one's experience of political repression, putting the heroes/victims in a position of having to conduct a necessary dialogue with the files, rather than giving them an opportunity to dismiss them directly. The emergence of an institution especially devoted to archiving and studying these files (the IPN) meant their symbolic and pragmatic recognition. The files attest to the past violence and vicious methods of the communist regime. They are means of confirming one as an eligible hero/victim. Such positioning of the files evokes ambivalent sentiments in the heroes/victims, who wish to see the files, and who feel disappointed if their files are not thick and substantial. They become attached to the idea of the secret police's interest in them, as expressed in the tangible forms of the files. An attraction to forms of objectification of their humiliation and the political violence they experienced bear consequences for the ways in which they enact their hero/victim selves.

The files gathered in the IPN have been opened to the public. People who think they were repressed can ask to view their own files, if any exist. There is a special day during which an IPN reading room, normally occupied by academics or journalists, is reserved for people who wish to read their own files. Reading one's files is a big, almost ritualistic event, about which the heroes/victims always talk. The files evoke the past again. Minute details of past situations are being discussed within a close circle of the heroes/victims' friends. 'Why did they write this?', 'Who could that have been?', 'Do you remember such an officer?' – These are exemplary questions that follow the reading of the files. By reporting to each other about what is in the files, the heroes/victims create a community of speakers who share competence in specialized knowledge. They know who interrogated each of them. They know how many days each of them spent in which cell. They look for details relevant to their personal stories in the stories told by others. In this way, they co-constitute each other and reconstruct the common past. Since they are allowed to take copies of the files, they also

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which, as Skultans argued, constituted an authentically individuated moral practice in the face of 'a dishonest society' that did not provide justice in the aftermath of communism.

lend such copies to one another. References to the files are numerous in the conversations among the heroes/victims, particularly when they used to conspire together. The files both empower and legitimize one's claims to a hero/victim identity and they allow outward expression of this identity. In the fragment below, Roman, who has recently looked into his files in the IPN, talks to Jan, who has not yet received permission to 'view his files' (although he has read parts of them from different sources). Roman has recently been the subject of gossip in the Association for 'cooperating'.

> Jan: He [referring to another hero/victim] is currently sitting in the IPN reading his files and he told me: 'imagine, fifty-eight pages!' So, I replied: 'fifty-eight pages is nothing!' [laughing].
>
> Roman: To produce such follies, it is a lot!
>
> Me: What interesting things did you see in the files?
>
> Roman: What interesting things?
>
> Jan: Interesting… that he has friends who are still alive, whom he treated with beer and vodka [laughing], and they in turn sneaked on him!
>
> Roman: Like that someone arrived – these sorts of descriptions, about family, about people whom I contacted, about that time when they arrived, and when Michal arrived
>
> Jan: Yet, nothing concerning me… when I visited you… because it was at night and they were sleeping [laughing][52].

Jan and Roman represent two different positions vis-à-vis the files. Roman takes a defensive stand, trying to discredit the files. I attribute such behaviour to the circulation of gossip about his cooperation. Clearly, he had numerous conversations with the security officers, and this fact cast suspicion on him. Jan, in contrast, aggrandizes the significance of the files. He seeks legitimacy in the files, noting how the size of the files matters for a hero/victim's identity. By answering my question for Roman, he certifies his hero/victim status by suggesting that people had informed on him (being surrounded by snitches is one of the indicators of an authentic hero/victim condition). This *strategy of alignment* (Schiffrin 1994) is an expression of the solidarity that binds heroes/victims. Eventually,

52 The recordings included in the text were transcribed verbatim and, when translating, I deliberately decided not to make them sound like colloquial English, but to stay close to the verbatim transcripts in Polish. The logic behind this decision was to convey the authenticity of the collected voices and to be faithful to the exact words, including hesitations, deviations, silences and even body language of the speakers.

Jan creates a *participation framework*[53] (Schiffrin 1994) for himself, as he feels obliged to explain his absence in the files, even though no one spoke about it. Apparently, he feels disappointed by the absence of a mention of his visit to Roman's place in the files. By voicing his utterances, he takes the opportunity to represent his hero/victim self. He shifts the focus of the conversation from Roman to 'I', staying within the same framework of Roman's files, bringing into the conversation a sense of shared experience. In his representation of that absence, Jan highlights his own cleverness: it was not the case that he was not worthy of being mentioned in the files - he purposely came at night to outwit the state security forces, hence avoiding being observed.

> Jan: Indeed, Michal told me: 'You know how they bullied Roman so that he… this and that'
>
> Roman: When I came back, in 1986, the militia officer said: 'You know, you should rehabilitate'[…]. I told him that I had already taken responsibility for my acts and that I would not have wanted others to suffer like I had.
>
> Jan: Yes. Oh yes, your parole was over.
>
> Roman: And that [.] second lieutenant who picked on me so much
>
> Jan: From UB
>
> Roman: I then told him: 'You so and so, when will you finally get off me?'
>
> Jan: [laughter].
>
> Roman: 'Because I do not have anymore… man, how long am I explaining to you that I will not be a snitch, you so and so', 'You will come to me on your knees to ask' and I am saying 'if I were to die, I would not ask you'. Only then did it finally end.

In this part of Jan's conversation with Roman, a view of a hero/victim concept is further uncovered. Jan imposes a frame of a hero/victim as 'bullied' by the security officer, creating a 'participatory framework' for Roman within which Roman will be able to objectify himself. Jan legitimizes Roman's experiences before he represents them by quoting another hero/victim. By bringing Michal's words into the conversation, Jan creates a sense of commonality of the heroes/victims' fate and experience. These words also convey a sense of solidarity among heroes/victims. Roman picks that frame up and represents himself in order to fit into it. He legitimizes his hero/victim self by quoting pieces of conversations he had with the security officers. In these conversations, he represents himself as resisting and opposing his interlocutor, as someone who is not willing

51 I draw here on E. Goffman's (1981) notion of the participation framework understood as a linguistic structure that organizes and is organized by talk and interaction in the making.

to cooperate. By bringing in this past situation, he objectifies his victim condition (as he was 'bullied') in which he behaved like a hero (by refusing to cooperate and by uttering rude replies).

My informants react to official documents affectively[54], since they consider them references for the truth and authenticity of their identity, a means through which their experience can be legitimately communicated. Such cultural belief is strengthened by the state practices, which authorize such an approach to the files[55]. The usage of the files produced by the agents of the communist state puts the heroes/victims in an ambiguous position. The files simultaneously speak for their suffering experienced under the regime; yet, their actual access to their content also constitutes an act of reinterpretation of their suffering under democratic conditions, which implies the incorporation of their anguish into the notion of heroism relevant for a national myth. The first evokes rather gloomy sentiments, while the second provides instruments for overcoming their experiences.

The borders between 'us' and 'them' have been gradually institutionally redefined in the aftermath of 1989. The existent state mechanisms for organizing exclusion and inclusion have been used by a new alliance of social forces in their struggle for the establishment of a new pattern of recognition and memory politics. Under such historical conditions, the suffering of heroes/victims has undergone a process of *statization*. Consequentially, the documents of the condemned state-form were taken over by a new institutionalized form represented by the IPN. They came to legitimize one's sentiments, experiences and self-enactments as a hero/victim. Heroes/victims have been located in an ambiguous condition in which they continue to develop their affects for the past situations and institutions at whose hands they suffered, simultaneously being tied through different affects to a new state-form by the usage of the same documents, which

52 Y. Navaro-Yashin, in her study of official documents in Britain and Cyprus, suggested an interesting approach in which documents are studied as affectively loaded phenomena. She argues that the affectivity is generated when documents are placed and circulated in a realm of specific social relations. This is not to say that the documents contain affectivity. Instead, 'they are perceived or experienced as affectively charged phenomena when produced and transacted in specific contexts of social relation' (81). The documents with which Navaro-Yashin preoccupied herself have been produced by legal forms of various statehoods (or states-to-be). These affectivities could be hence recognized (after B. Aretxaga 2005) as 'non-rational' underneath apparently rationalized state functions (84). In the Euro-American paradigm, and Polish culture apparently fits this paradigm, documents are considered as references for truth and authenticity (Navaro-Yashin 2007).

53 The files are for instance used by the IPN and the court in 'lustration processes', which are intended to decide whether or not a public person cooperated in some form with the political police of the communist regime.

now bear new stamps certifying their relocation and membership of a new era. Every usage of such documents is symbolic and constitutive for the making of a new order. The documents are more than instruments for maintaining a hero/victim identity. They declare the legitimacy of a new state-form which has overwritten the communist one by marking and numbering anew its most secret and important documents – those of the security services. It is not just the heroes/victims and their experiences who were turned into the symbolic capital of a new state - So were the security files. Among other channels, the security files are being incorporated into the body of societal practices through affectivities performed by the heroes/victims while interacting with the files or with the idea of the files. Their dissemination is a material sign of the demise of the previous regime. Secretly archived during communism, the files are now being gathered in private houses, filling the drawers of heroes/victims. The objectified political rhetoric has been incorporated by the heroes/victims, who took a political name evocative of themselves, the nation, and particular values. Through the naming practices and the construction of genealogies undertaken by historians, politicians and priests, these practices have an ordering power over the memories of violence and humiliation.

> Jan: I will see. I talked to Piotr and he said he would check what and why I am still waiting. After all, you waited only one year or less.
>
> Roman: I did not wait.
>
> Jan: You see, and I have been waiting two years already!
>
> Roman: Mhm
>
> Me: But it is difficult
>
> Jan: And I am saying 'why does he have access and I do not?'
>
> Roman: No, you see, because there are eleven volumes.
>
> Jan: I know, because I looked through these files carefully.
>
> Roman: But in the 9th volume there is my file.
>
> Jan: I know, I know.
>
> Roman: And nobody else's. I was surprised there were no other files. Michal said
>
> Jan: I do not know. Maybe they did not show you everything – damn it! Because it depends. For instance, Jurek, he had a special file as a TW and they have a completely different numeration and designation.
>
> Roman: Maybe…

What remains important for Jan is to 'be given access' - to physically sit in the IPN and read his files. 'To be given access' is another institutional component of being a hero/victim in the present. Being pitted against one's files creates a situ-

ation in which the subject position of a hero/victim is situated and intensively lived. Yet, equally important may be one's reception by the IPN officials, who are perceived as an important circle on whom the legitimacy of one's status depends. They are the people who create historical accounts. They are the ones who report to the administration about the 'cleanness' of one's files. Finally, the access to the files created a situation in which a hero/victim status turned into a condition of competition. Heroes/victims often regard themselves in the context of other heroes/victims. Statements such as, in Jan's words, 'After all, you waited only one year or less' or 'why does he have access and I do not?' reveal the condition of constant positioning of the heroes/victims' experience. The performance of solidarity and collective spirit is coupled with a constant measurement of oneself vis-à-vis the other, who belongs to the same group. This condition is deepened by the issuance of various state documents verifying and acknowledging the hero/victim status.

Material forms of recognition

White argued that national narratives engender a sense of belonging and acquire emotional valence for individual speakers through the involvement of their self-narratives into the national narrative (White 1999:507). However, such processes should not be reduced to the level of textual or spoken narrative only. Objectification processes, which in turn shape practices of incorporation, should be understood as a complex semiotic and emotional experience that is not coherently encapsulated in a narrative genre but implies a wide range of interactions. The mistake to avoid is what Charles Goodwin phrased 'lumping everything that isn't language into the category of "context"' (Goodwin 2000:1490). Analysis of human action and interaction should consider 'simultaneous use of multiple semiotic resources by participants' (Goodwin 2000:1490). The heroes/victims have gained access to an amazing pool of semiotic resources – material, textual, interactional - that enable their performances as heroes/victims.

Files are circulating among the heroes/victims. They are desired documents; they are easily readable and eagerly used when talking about the past with other people, especially when photographs are attached to individual dossiers compiled by the security officers. My informants somehow prefer to objectify themselves through material and officially approved markers of their experiences rather than giving their life stories. This is not just a linguistic repertoire that the heroes/victims gain through acts of associating. The whole world of materiality indexing their heroism and suffering is provided by the previous and current state-forms, and the Association works as an intermediary in the process of ac-

quisition of various forms of acknowledgment that can then serve as indices of one's past.

Walking from one hero/victim's flat to another, I was always being welcomed with a cup of tea next to which there was a pile of files, copied, and waiting for me to look through. Official papers incorporated into the familial space give a sense of control over them, a sense of closure – the past, which was denied, finally returns and is owned by the violated individuals. Yet, their presence simultaneously awakens affects as the past is being brought into proximity again. In fact, domestication of this past forces its physical incorporation into the lived space. One autumnal evening, when I visited Andrzej, a member of the Association, we looked through his files, as I did with everyone else. After we had gone through his family album and part of his life story, he started to search for one document 'I ought to see'. Eventually, he pulled out a piece of paper with a copy of an enlarged photograph of a male's face. Keeping it exposed for me, almost covering his own face with it, he informed me in a shaky voice 'this is my perpetrator' – a judge who sentenced him. The visual objectification of someone who was an antagonist in his broken life story made the inherently intimate experience of violence, which had long been veiled in secrecy, obvious.

On my first visits to the Association, people would not even give me an outline of a life sketch, but would instead put in front of me on the table an identity card, in fact usually more than one, which constituted material proof of their status – this is how they presented themselves to a newcomer. One of the heroes/victims, Andrzej, seeing Stanisław pulling out his 'victim of repressions' ID and placing it in front of me, swiftly approached me and started to announce with fervour that he had something better to show me. In a matter of seconds, he pulled out of his pocket a set of three black and white photographs printed out on a paper slip, and presented it as his trophy. I swiftly recognized an item typical of the content of the IPN files of the heroes/victims, namely a photograph of a prisoner's vignettes taken by a security officer. These ones seemed original and, had I looked at them for a little longer, I might have recognized Andrzej as a young boy with a scared face. 'It is me, a few hours after the imprisonment!', he said, partially with pride and partially with the joy of taking someone by surprise, enthusiastically pointing at the photo. I did not know what to say, so I just stared at Andrzej in his teens and then at Andrzej in his seventies, nodded my head, murmured something like 'unbelievable' and moved on to the regular sort of ID that Stanisław had to offer for inspection.

When I turned my eyes back to the table, three rectangular pieces of paper were already displayed in a relative order. Stanisław presented me with an ID of a 'repressed person', a certificate granting him combatant's privileges, and an ID proving his membership of the Association. The first ID was issued by the

Social Insurance Bureau in 2004. It indicated Stanisław's ID and allowance numbers as well as citing a medical opinion stating that Stanisław was 'partially' and 'permanently' disabled for work in connection with his engagement in an organization striving for independence and his imprisonment between 1953 and1956. As underlined once again by a stamp, this ID has been issued to Stanisław 'permanently'. 'Here, here', said Stanisław, pointing at the fragment of medical opinion, 'they stated I was unable to work because of the anticommunist activity'. When I asked, 'but what are these disabilities?', Stanisław answered in a lower voice, 'oh, this and that'. When I persisted by asking once again, he first mentioned neurosis and balance impairment, and then swiftly moved on to all sorts of medicaments he was taking and stories of his recent visits to a doctor, mixing them together with the medical visits and health problems of his wife and mother-in-law. I kept looking at the second piece of paper issued by the Office for Matters of Combatants and Persecuted Persons, which, like the previous one, had a number of stamps, an ID number, Stanisław's photograph attached to it and his signature. This ID had been issued in 1992 and its main purpose was to certify that Stanisław had been granted discounts and services as decided upon in one particular legal act concerning combatants, victims of war and post-war repression. The last piece of paper looked like a simulacrum of the ones already presented; it was issued and signed by Leszek (the president and a colleague from the clandestine anti-communist organization) and it certified Stanisław's membership of the Association. Both proud of his three IDs and embarrassed about revealing their medical content to me, Stanisław was just about to say something when the dominating voice of Leszek reached us both: 'Ania, this is nothing, I will show you a real thing'. He threw on the table, nonchalantly but with a grin of satisfaction, a piece of silver paper; it was similar in size to those just presented by Stanisław, but it folded at 90 degrees. It looked more like an invitation. It had a logo on its front page, reminiscent of a German war cross. It was indeed a cross, but it was in the shape of a white-and-red flag with a black square placed in the middle containing two letters: K and S. Stanisław became a little sad. Other people sitting around our table were nodding their heads (a sign of recognition, I tend to think). I reached for the silver rectangle and opened it. 'ID number 33' - rather different to Stanisław's numbers: 489/04 or 016605/U-10445/92. I read: 'The Association of the Political Prisoners Sentenced to Death during the Communist Regime', then Leszek's photograph and a black stamp with the same logo (K and S standing for an abbreviation of an expression: *kara śmierci* - death sentence) and the date of issue: '3/5/1995'. Leszek's date and place of birth followed his full name, and the document was then dramatically summed up by the capitalized letters, 'SENTENCED BY THE COMMUNISTS TO DEATH FOR A STRUGGLE IN THE

NAME OF INDEPENDENT POLAND', again stamped and verified by the signatures of a duly appointed president and a secretary. 'Very few of these have been issued', said Leszek, somewhat sadly but with pleasure too. 'Very few of us are left', he stated proudly, as if to indicate that, one day, he will become the oldest carrier of such an ID, as most of the people with death sentences issued by the communist courts were older than him. Leszek, affecting a certain carelessness, was simultaneously looking for something in his presidential drawer. As if doing it for the sake of a novice, he tossed a few other papers onto the table in order to give me a chance to increase my knowledge and understanding. We moved unexpectedly to medals, military ranks and honours – seemingly a rung higher in the ladder of recognition. Again, this step was established through a joint effort by both state officials and heroes/victims who, apart from the verification commission, set up another body, the Commission for Awards and Promotions (*Komisja Odznaczeń i Awansów*). This Commission proposes heroes/victims for awards and military promotions, and discusses such possibilities with local officials, ensuring that the nationalist state practice does not lose its militaristic character.

When I looked inside a little booklet certifying Leszek's medal issued by the President of the Republic of Poland, Stanisław realized there was one more paper he had not yet shown me. A blue piece of paper he showed me told of an award he was given by a secretary of state. Meanwhile, however, Leszek pulled out another 'cross for the courageous' and 'pro memoria' medal certificates, clearly highlighting the difference between himself and Stanisław - a difference that was indissoluble.

Conclusion

Material signs of commemoration, material remnants of the past and currently fabricated objects, which are used to certify heroism or victimhood or both, work towards the ultimate attachment of the version of the communist past to the members of the Association, gluing the social roles of heroes/victims to them[56], and cementing their identities, as they become nested in lasting networks and bonds of loyalty. As the reception of social recognition occurs through official and religious registers[57], the performances of these identities become authoritatively demandable. They generate a sense of obligation derived from being a hero/victim felt vis-à-vis the national and religious community and the narrower circle of col-

54 I draw here on D. Miller's argument that the materiality may serve as a means through which people affiliate themselves with social roles (Miller 2005).

55 The discussion on the religious register follows in the next chapter.

leagues who participated in the anti-communist struggle. Due to being associated, the heroes/victims do not extract any relief from a singular act of commemoration. They start to exist in a state-legitimized network of associations responsible for conspicuous proliferation of material marks in the memory landscape, including public and private spaces. Because they are recognized not as individuals but as the collective treasure of the nation, they feel obliged to keep performing their hero/victim identities, which at times generates ambiguous sentiments in them[58]. In fact, through their membership of the Association, they take on a responsibility and carry an on-going burden after remembering and commemorating themselves. In their case, the past turned into what Henry Russo called, in reference to the French Vichy affair, 'a past which doesn't pass' (1991).

56 I will discuss the topic of the ambiguous position of a hero/victim more extensively in chapter five, which is devoted to the figure of the president of the Association.

Chapter Three
Religious Framework for Embodied Mutual Orientation: a hero/victim experience situated in the Catholic Church

> The love of servitude cannot be established except as the result of a deep, personal revolution in human minds and bodies.
>
> Aldous Huxley *Brave New World*

In this chapter, I undertake an analysis of twelve sermons, which were delivered in Marianowice on the occasions of commemorative events co-organized by the heroes/victims. I complement the discourse analysis of the sermons with an analysis of the material aspect of the rituals' experience as well as focusing on an exemplary image that fortifies the bond between the heroes/victims and the Catholic Church. I argue that these various layers of meaningful religious practice play a significant role in the heroes/victims' model of self-understanding and interactive remembering and should be understood as having resulted from a structural mutual orientation of the religious institution and my informants.

The rule of elective affinity

The Catholic religion is a significant aspect of the heroes/victims' *lifeworlds*. The Church constitutes a special place for the heroes/victims as it provides them with a sense of continuity in contrast to the changing state-forms. It is particularly important to them that the priests share their understanding of the past and recognize, as well as give legitimacy and meaning to, their sense of victimhood and heroism. Each commemorative event and each annual associational meeting are preceded by a mass and include priests on the guest list[59]. The ritual calendar of members of the Association is well organized in advance. Normally, it is pre-

57 The heroes/victims have their preferred, befriended priests, those on whom they can rely, who will always provide them with a constructive, 'valuable' sermon. However, when the commemorative event is organized by the national or local authorities, the priest may not convey the meaning with which they identify. On such occasions, some of them do not go to the celebrations, and others criticize the sermon after it has been given.

arranged in the voivode office, where the main national holidays and commemorative events performed locally are decided upon and agreed with an advisory board constituted by some of the heroes/victims. Throughout my fieldwork, all of the national holidays and commemorative events included in the calendar and attended by the heroes/victims were preceded by a Catholic mass. Big national rituals in Marianowice were either opened in the main church or in a church assigned to the military garrison (*kościół garnizonowy*). On such occasions, a church aisle is filled with two long rows of young soldiers with guns hanging tensely on their shoulders, used during the mass to fire a volley. If there is space in the main aisle, the old heroes gather in threes close to the altar, each group guarding a standard.

The Church agents legitimize the past actions and experiences of the heroes/victims and integrate them into a religious and nationalist framework. The analyzed sermons, rituals and images work as acts of objectification of the heroes/victims' experience and conventionalize it. As much as the institutionalized practices of the state have channelled the heroes/victims into the inherently political ways of experiencing their past actions, turning them into a decisive component of the contemporary self, the agents of the Church have synchronized with such efforts, providing a religious component. Members of the Association move through two sorts of authoritative spaces: religious spaces and those belonging to the state. In these spaces, functioning as *comfort zones*, an experience of a hero/victim self is enabled. The heroes/victims, through their participation in specially organized celebrations, experience remembering themselves as moral agents, as those who personify sacrifice. They become experientially integrated into a religious myth rooted locally in Polish nationalism. Both forces, the Church (Catholicism) and the state (nationalism) are recognized here as potent institutional agents forming the memory practice of the heroes/victims, coproducing a situated experience of a self. Looking at the ritualized religious experiences of heroes/victims situated in contemporary Marianowice, I argue that Church agents participating in them, through their practices, not only cement a model of a hero/victim envisaged as a Christ-like yet nationally-oriented martyr, but also strengthen the bonds of loyalty binding the heroes/victims, state, army and religion together.

Repositioning of the Church

Religious institutions and ideologies impact upon the institutionalization of *memory politics* and the *politics of collective healing* by converging with other

structures and values in various localities[60]. The Catholic Church in Poland[61], broadly represented and understood as a symbolic space of national resistance, emerged as a *natural* participant in and provider of cultural forms and symbolic space for *memory practice* after 1989. To a large extent, it was perceived as such before 1989, when churches were animating people's imagination as places of resistance, while certain figures of priests, such as Father Popiełuszko or Father Wojtyła, embodied courage and authenticity vis-à-vis the decaying communist authorities. At that time, it was a *counter-memory* (Foucault 1977) that grew as a collective practice in religious space in opposition to the state-led memory politics. The Church was perceived as the only public space where certain truths could be spoken about. In the post-1989 context, the Church became an explicit collaborator in the project of *memory politics* orchestrated by the state and supported by the grass-roots actors.

Yet the Church, despite constituting a symbol of resistance, has also been tainted by the cooperation of its agents with the repressive apparatus of the communist state. The secret police had a special unit for dealing with religious institutions – monitoring them, recruiting for cooperation and controlling. This implied an ambiguous situatedness of the Church in post-communism; while constituting a sacred symbol of resistance best exemplified by Pope John Paul II, it became concurrently hallmarked by cooperation. The initial stand taken by the hierarchy implied avoidance of any public discussion of the topic. The Catholic clergy as a legal category was not subjected to the Polish *lustration laws*, which were quite extensive in terms of the categories of people they encompassed. Priests, unlike other, secular, public figures, were not required to declare publicly whether they had cooperated with the communist secret services. Following the rule of autonomy of the Church vis-à-vis the state, it was accepted that lustration should be an internal affair of this institution. Nonetheless, both the mass media and independent researchers showed lots of interest in the topic of priests' collaboration with the communist regime, discussing particular cases publicly. Under public pressure, the Catholic Church commenced what seemed like a more systematic settling of the accounts by establishing, in 2006, the Internal Lustration Commission (*Kościelna Komisja Historyczna*) to investigate

58 See R. Wilson (2000) for the case of South Africa, or J. Borneman (1997) for the German example.

59 This chapter will not attempt to do justice to the complex reality of the Catholic Church both during communism and in its aftermath. Neither during communism nor in its aftermath has the Catholic Church in Poland been a monolith speaking in unison. The sermons analyzed in this chapter, however, should be associated with the more conservative and nationalist members of the clergy, who eagerly orient themselves towards the heroes/victims, presenting views similar to their world-views.

the cases of past cooperation. The Commission established its regional counterparts, the members of which devoted their time to studying the files collected in the branches of the IPN. The Commission announced in its report that more than a dozen Polish bishops during communism were registered as engaging in some form of cooperation[62]. This implied that the files were seriously incomplete; thus, in numerous cases, they provided a chaotic and insufficient picture of individual contacts with the apparatus of repression. The question of 'voluntary cooperation' was further complicated by the fact that the priests had not been required to certify their cooperation with a signature. In fact, until very recently, the problem had not been consistently solved by the hierarchy, which, while building its public image based on the workings of the Commission, maintained, in its internal dealings with the supporters of lustration, that these were 'issues in which nobody has interest these days' (Isakowicz-Zaleski 2007:8). According to Father Isakowicz-Zaleski, we can talk about a deliberate policy within the Catholic Church of avoiding lustration[63].

Exposed to attacks and accusations of past cooperation, the Church adopts a defensive stance, badly in need of an alliance in which its patriotic and anti-communist engagements might be exposed publicly. Involvement in the publicly visible *memory practice* together with the state officials and heroes/victims counterbalances destructive allegations of the Church's cooperation. The participation of Church agents in *memory practices* legitimizes the status of the institution as morally valuable and anti-communist. It constitutes a resource, a possibility of a repeatable performance of such an image, additionally cementing the mutually legitimating bonds of loyalty, among others, through the practice of patriotic sermons.

60 The reports of the Commission can be found on its official website: www.episkopat.pl.

61 Isakowicz-Zaleski, despite great difficulties and years of struggle, managed to publish a controversial book concerning relations between the clergy and the secret services. While working on the manuscript, he was continually advised by his superiors 'to let it go, for the sake of the wellbeing of the church' (Isakowicz-Zaleski 2007:8), as the publication involved, apart from names recognizable locally only, stories of cooperation concerning celebrated Church figures. The scandals involving bishops and archbishops continue to surface. Some more extreme sources claim that the hierarchy agreed with the communist authorities during the *roundtable talks* that the files produced by the security department dealing with the Church should fade away.

The patriotic sermons[64]

The patriotic sermons constitute a necessary element of every commemorative ritual in which the heroes/victims participate. They carry important meanings for the construction of their self-schemata. The quotes used in this chapter come from the twelve sermons I attended during the fieldwork. Their full recordings and transcripts can be found in the APAN.

The country is the mother

During the patriotic sermons, Poland is often being talked about in kinship metaphors, and represented in the fragments below by the kinship simile. Despite the fact that the word *ojczyzna* (fatherland/motherland) takes its etymology from a word *ojciec* (father), in patriotic sermons Poland is commonly depicted as a mother. Evocations such as the following are omnipresent in patriotic sermons and often legitimized by references to Polish poetry or the well-established canon of national literature:

> […] Their remains are here forever, so as to attest to their love for the country (*ojczyzna*), for the mother, because the country is the mother.

Personified, Poland brings to heroes/victims' minds affective kinship imageries in the form of personal recollections. Many of them told me that, during such sermons, they think of their parents and families. In this way, the affect for one's own country is naturalized through reference to life experience. Love towards the motherland is represented as having a high value, the logic of which relies on other specific categories such as sacrifice and servitude. The mother is represented as a 'special mother' who has 'suffered' a lot continuously throughout history. Along these lines, the heroes are represented in the sermons as the children of the suffering motherland. They are described as very specific children – 'the faithful servants', the most magnificent ones, those ready for the uppermost sacrifice.

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62 I use the term *patriotic sermons* to rephrase the emic term – patriotic services (*msze patriotyczne*) - used by Poles to indicate the Catholic masses containing nationalist and anti-communist messages. *Msze patriotyczne* constituted popular acts of resistance during communism. They were invigilated by the security officers, who observed and registered the participants, as well as recorded the sermons. The priests who organized masses with such content were repressed by the communist secret police. After the collapse of the regime, the heroes/victims still use this expression to name Catholic services organized today on the anti-communist commemorative occasions.

> One-hundred-and-eighty young people! Amongst them, there were the leaders of the partisan troops – beautiful, magnificent heroes, who fought the German occupier for the motherland, to defend the country. And there came another occupier and this second one was joined by the Poles – some of the Poles, those with a black soul; and [they] were putting these glorious boys to death.
>
> Let the memory of these magnificent people - people who sacrificed their lives for the motherland, -reach everywhere.

A cultural hero/victim category

> What do I want to tell you, honourable combatants, veterans, on today's occasion – they are playing LARUM, heroes, martyrs of the concentration camps, soviet gulags, forests and the underground, martyrs of the communist system, they are playing LARUM for Poland, LARUM for such a Poland, which you dreamt of, for which generations were fighting and sacrificed their lives.
>
> … that formation, which since 1944 in such a way [.] destroyed the prominent sons and daughters of the Polish land. For the blood and the sacrifice of the priest, mentioned yesterday, Popiełuszko […].

From this metaphorical language, a certain cultural category of hero/victim emerges – a child of a sacred motherland. Such descriptions as 'prominent', 'honourable', 'soldiers', 'people who sacrificed their lives' point towards a group of people with a special status, people who will be 'recognized by God upon the final judgment as embodying goodness'. Through the interchangeable discursive blinking of a triptych (mother: Mary: Poland; son: Christ: hero/victim), the connection is established, and a powerful version of an affective cultural form of a hero/victim emerges. With these words, 'heroes/victims' are equated with the most powerful martyrs of the Catholic Church – Jesus Christ, and the more localized, such as the priest Popiełuszko. These acts of recognition structure feelings of affinity and a sense of belonging in the listeners. They further give a sense of acceptance and admiration of their actions. As they are called 'the most prominent children of the motherland', they are also juxtaposed with 'the other', for whom a language of kinship is not ascribed.

The other

'That formation', 'another occupier' and 'Poles with black souls' introduce 'the other' and give it an aura of exclusion, non-belonging, and evil powers. The agents of the communist state are externalized from the religious and national community and their nature essentialized as evil. The priests' words deal with them in the following manner:

> These were the people who spoke Polish, but who were not Polish. They were foreign mercenaries.
>
> […] there were people who gave themselves up to the service of iniquity. I believe that one day there will be the grave, and the judgement, not by SB, God's judgement. Just one. The Final Judgement. And some will be parted from the others. Some will stand on the right side – 'come to my Kingdom', the others on the left side [….]

The memory must be kept alive

The sermons draw a line of continuity in an effort to link pre-communist Poland, underground Poland embodied in the sacrifice of the heroes/victims during communism and, finally, liberated Poland, which, at last situated in a democratic condition, nevertheless still needs to protect its Polishness and faith. This historically informed vision is linguistically realized through statements such as the following:

> We did not have a state for ages. The Polish nation for a very long time, as we know, lived in a foreign country, in foreign countries during the partitions […]
>
> It is worth looking into the words of the nation's prophets, who grew up in similar conditions and who carried the same sort of worry for the quality of public life, and who were prepared for the highest sacrifice.

The struggle of the heroes/victims is being legitimized through the representation of the persistent repression of Polishness, historically performed by successive foreign occupations, and a long tradition of resistance in a form of 'sacrifice', which proves that the kernel of Polishness exists and that it is thanks to the sacrificial actions of this kernel that freedom can be now experienced by younger generations of Poles. The emphasis on 'suffering' and 'sacrifice' deepens the structures of affinity that the heroes/victims feel in relation to the authority of the Church, further intensified by legitimation of a continuous need for exposure of the suffering and testimony of the heroes/victims. The following words uttered in the sermons produce such an effect of embracing the heroes/victims by building in them a sense of affinity, relevance and recognition:

> Just as today's Gospel says – here a father of a family is extracting from his treasury both new and old things. He turns towards history, towards the past so as to search for an inspiration, also a spiritual strength for building the present and the future.
>
> It is not enough to remember, respect and transmit the history of the motherland – this is important, but it should not be the final aim. The blood of the martyrs, the monuments, the graves are demanding something more, […] they call for action. This blood was poured for us and our future generations so that we took care and co-created the new in today's world, the new together with God, who is our path of

> truth and life. The Catholics form the Church, and the same Catholics form the state. To tear this unity is to strike into the strength of a nation, destroying its spirit.

The new Poland, in the form of its youth, needs to turn for inspiration to the victims/heroes, who should receive the special status of a living testimony functioning as a constant reminder of past oppressions and of a need for love for the country, which can be realized only in the alliance with Christian values and religiosity. Commemorative practices are recognized here as an important aspect of intergenerational transmission of values and knowledge, as well as being seen as an expression of tribute paid to the victims/heroes.

Your torturers are doing very well in today's reality

Eventually, the past struggle is extended over the present condition as it turns out that, despite the transition towards democracy, the threat is still present, and the need for vigilance is still valid and is hence put forward in a gospel. The threat is announced thus:

> Here, let us feel like the patriots responsible for the dissemination of truth. Let's not allow the ideologically loaded version to be imposed on us.
>
> We have to defend ourselves! We have to tell the world the truth about our history!
>
> Simultaneously, we need to constantly remind the new generation about the essential differences, the essence of which, from today's perspective, not all of us can understand.

These others are identified and granted a post-communist life in the sermons in the following exemplary ways:

> If someone suggests that, in the processes of transition, the main role was played by the collaborators and traitors, it means that he/she has a private version of history, a history in which there is no place for respect for human effort, but instead he presents his private opinion with nonchalance. During the marital law, we got used to the similar version of interpretation presented by the government. Today we can trace in the commentaries of some of the journalists and politicians a pathetic manifestation of the return to what we thought was pathological.
>
> Those who would necessarily want to represent the cradle of *Solidarity* as a muddy landscape, and those, who do not see a testimony of dignity, but instead are talking in a language typical of the spokesman of the PRL's government […]

However, the imagery of the active 'other' is not confined to the production of false history. In fact, there emerges a vision of an incomplete transformation, a vision in which the end of communism has not yet arrived, as communist agents managed to secure their economic wellbeing and also escaped judgement for the repression carried out against the Polish nation. Here, affinity is being built

through reference to the mundane hardships of the heroes/victims' lives and by contrasting them with a representation of the wellbeing of their 'perpetrators'. For people who repeatedly felt that they could not afford to provide a proper future for their children (apart from the physical and symbolic struggle for the liberation of the country that had consigned them to economic subjugation), the subsequent words of the priest hit an affective register:

> Priest: But has it changed totally? No. Not completely. Your torturers are doing very well in today's reality. The pensions, as is reported, are exorbitant. 5000 or 6000 is an average for them. And the victims? They have to make their pile, to live by on their wits, to think.
>
> Woman: There's no way!
>
> Priest: No! They are still influential, they have the mass media, they have the press, and they have propaganda.
>
> Woman: They have the money!
>
> Priest: And here you are right, they have the money. […] The guilt is. There is no question about it. But now, has a proportional punishment been imposed for this guilt?

This last fragment comes from a speech by a priest uttered in a City Hall dining room on the occasion of the Easter meeting organized for the heroes/victims with the help of the local authorities. A less formal setting opened a space for interaction. Here, a woman's voice, interacting with the speech of the priest, could be considered proof of the effectiveness of the priest's speech act in terms of creating a feeling of affinity based on a common perception of transition. This imagery of transition works towards deepening the myopic, Manichean representations that order the past according to the ideological lines of division between the communists and the Catholics. Such visions are being further mapped onto the present day, feeding the fantasy of a constant threat and a need for mobilization under Catholicism in order to stand up to it.

Divine time, time of history and Church masks

In the religious accounts of history uttered during the patriotic sermons, God plays skillfully with our fates. Life, in this version, becomes a test of souls, and it should be sacrificed in order to achieve salvation. Onto such an ontology of human history, a more specific vision of contemporary Polish history is mapped. Communism is described as 'mud', 'pathology', 'sick psyche', 'tradition of distorting the truth', 'a wrong construction of the human being', 'a sinister ideology', 'evil' and 'an ideology of hatred'. The aim of 'the communists' is to 'destroy the nation's memory' and suppress the 'real Poland'.

On the 1st of September 2007, the priest in a church in Marianowice spoke to the heroes/victims from the altar:

> The memory of the tragic date, the 17th of September 1939, survived thanks to the Church, to the most part, thanks to the brave priests who, putting their lives at risk, spoke aloud the truth about the perfidious stab in the back, blown by the Soviet Union towards fighting Poland.

The silence filling the space in between the priest's words was piercing. The same piercing silence intensified the gravity of past calamities recalled by another priest, who spoke to the heroes/victims at an occasion for consecrating a commemorative plaque placed in one of Marianowice's churches on the 20th of October 2007.

> In what name did the people who spoke the Polish language murder Father Popiełuszko? Yet, was it only him? […] And what of those many others murdered by unknown culprits? Why does a man kill another man? In the name of what? In the name of ideology? Ideology built upon hate, hatred of God and everything that relates to the belief in God.

The Church as an institution is represented in these sermons by a martyr's face - the priest Popiełuszko. The dead bodies of martyrs were eagerly used by the priests to whom I listened to represent the Church as a repository of the 'true Poland', the main site of resistance to communism. In the post-communist condition, voices of criticism have emerged that bring into the public discussion instances of priests' cooperation with the communist regime. In the sermons, the priests' collaboration with the communist regime was blamed on the weak human nature of the clergy, while the icons of the priests-martyrs were simultaneously evoked in sermons as saints who played along with the divine scenario.

On the 12th of January 2007, the heroes/victims assembled at a post-Christmas gathering along with the representatives of the local authorities, a priest and their honorary guests to divide the wafer and celebrate the birth of the Christ. In relation to the most recent media scandal, the priest uttered the following words in his welcoming speech directed at the heroes/victims, giving a sense of his perception of a possible lustration of priests:

> Yesterday, the bishops announced that they would undergo lustration. This reminds me of fighting a dragon. In reality, this dragon needs a constant sacrifice – when it swallows one victim, there will be another one. This way that they will not undergo lustration and it will then be over. No. The war is on-going. Immense. For Christ. For Christianity.

Making of a new order

Jennifer Cole, in her work on Madagascar, suggested that memory practice is a key site to observe how individual subjectivity links with larger projects of political struggle and social transformation over time (Cole 2001). The spaces of the Church and the public squares are designed to make such connections possible. In these spaces, through a collective endeavour, a common version of the past is being experienced. Personal narrative and history construct each other (White 1999); however, in order to be relevant for the collective identity, representations of the past must connect to the present (White 2006:331). In the Church, the past has been linked to the present in the form of an intentional gathering of social groups that share their current interests in delimiting lines of inclusion and exclusion from a symbolic landscape. The gatherings gained a ritualized form marked by established arrangements of sacred and profane authority. The heroes/victims in the Church participate in the (re)making of an order. The religious ritual in fact attends the social transformation and it should be understood in the context of power relations. In his work on the Indian festival of Aiyanar, Nicolas Dirks argued that anthropological writing should not underplay the part of ritual that deals with the cultural construction of authority and the dramatic display of the social lineaments of power (Dirks 1993). He proposes that the ritual is about display and the achievement of power, while power is 'an endless series of relations characterized by struggle' (Dirks 1993:501). What happened in the churches of Marianowice during the patriotic masses I attended had to do with a display of new configurations of power in the period after the collapse of the previous state-form. These rituals constituted critical moments for the public articulation of new definitions of collectivity in which visibility was granted to an alliance distinguished on the basis of its anti-communism. Importantly, though, the order of the heroes/victims, the Church and the state agents is just one of many orders to have emerged from various forms of social interactions in post-communist Poland. For the participants, however, the rituals generated a sense of timelessness and centrality of the experienced truth, as much as this truth validated their centrality in the new order.

Semiotic Fields of the Association

> 'If things mediate our historicity, we cannot be content to ask only what meanings people attribute to them now. And even of those meanings, we must be attentive to the ways in which they are (for the time being) regimented and brought into relation to other things – much of this being the task of social power' (Keane 2005:193).

For Goodwin, social action should be understood as constructed in interaction through 'the temporally unfolding juxtaposition of quite different kinds of semiotic resources' (Goodwin 2000:1490). Turning to the ethnographic material that I gathered during the religious parts of commemorated events, I propose to view the experience of a hero/victim as a social practice established interactively, an important component of which is constituted by their orientation towards religious semiotic resources. The commemorative rituals make the human body '[…] publicly visible as the site for a range of structurally different kinds of displays implicated in the constitution of the actions of the moment' (Goodwin 2000:1490). The aspect of display is crucial in the case of the heroes/victims' experience since it converges with an inherently public aspect of this identity. The movement between objectification and internalization takes place through a simultaneous interaction with various semiotic resources. In the religious context, the speech and materiality represent juxtaposed kinds of resources with which heroes/victims interact. It is important to underline the repetitive aspect of 'patriotic sermons' and their relative frequency. The members of the Association have a chance to participate in such religious encounters on average once a month. Often, they themselves initiate such occasions. Cultural vehicles expressed in ritualized and material forms help members of the Association gain control over their past and their identities by limiting their zone of security and belonging, as well as by giving coherent meaning to their past actions. The practice of religious demarcation also occurs in the Association's office.

A tiny space where the members of the Association gather is marked by numerous images and artefacts. One room assigned to the Association by the local authorities, is filled with desks and chairs; there, next to national emblems and portraits of historical figures, hang a cross and a portrait of Holy Mary. The members of the Association, while domesticating the offered space, filled it with symbols that articulate their *boundaries of the familiar* (Morgan 1998:10), their sense of belonging. The space of the Association was turned into a *place* (Pred 1986) by the exposure of symbolic religious and national representations. Clearly, these are the markers of *security zones* in which the hero/victim self can be enacted, experiencing no resistance. The images work as cultural means of articulating the self and one's nesting in the world. These objects constitute symbols of the heroes/victims' devotion to Polishness. Eventually, hanging there in the Association, being looked at each Thursday, they also constitute a means of repetitive and constant practice of belief. The act of looking should be understood as an embodied form of cognition and collective memory practice enabled by material conditions of social being (Morgan 1998:4). As the conditions of associating have been historically and culturally structured, they have also been co-produced by the heroes/victims, who themselves decorated the office with

the pictures. Eventually, the specific arrangement of the space has worked towards the maintenance of their sentiments, identities and alliances.

During the patriotic masses, heroes/victims lives were "lifted up" to another plane (Bloch 2002). This "lifting up" concerned an experience of recognition and display. On such occasions, materiality is used as a channel for displaying one's affiliations, increasing one's visibility, indexing bonds of loyalties, and creating certain affects. Heroes/victims carefully ironing their white shirts and uniforms, taking out from their drawers the white-and-red badges with the names of their Associations to be slipped on their sleeves, rushing to pick up the standards hidden in the office, carrying their military caps in plastic bags so as not to dirty them, to put them on clean when the moment comes – all of these little practices happening around artefacts marked the moment as special, and they "lifted up" the experience of celebration, moving the heroes/victims to its visible centre. These artefacts did not simply mediate the heroes/victims' experience of the celebration. They made a certain quality of this experience possible. As argued by Webb Keane, clothing does not simply express identities. Clothing produces experience. In the case of the heroes/victims, it produces the experience of being recognized and that of belonging to a community which is not only ideational, but which finally tangibly exists (Keane 2005:192). For many of the heroes/victims, their anti-communist activities implied fighting for an idea of Poland. Thus, the model for their healing in the present involves experiencing the notion that the idea for which they fought has finally been realized[65]. Their participation in the official rituals conveys to them a sense of realization, an achievement of an independent Poland, a nation state that relies on a set of values in which they believe. At the same time, the rituals create for them an occasion on which they become publicly visible. Walking in their uniforms, with standards and badges, they look proud and distinct. Their bodies may be read as pangs of conscience, as victory, as a ridiculous tradition or as a political masquerade. From the point of view of the contemporary state narrative, material signs mark them as a symbolic capital. Importantly, they feel safe and recognized walking in their uniforms only on specific days, when there is a national and Catholic ritual organized for them.

Because most of the heroes/victims "lost" significant parts of their lives and health during the fighting and in prison, in describing their lives they often use the notions of 'wasted youth' (*zmarnowana młodość*) or 'blighted life chances'

63 The heroes/victims often talked about the fulfilment they felt during the patriotic masses and official celebrations. This feeling was generated by the acts of recognition and value ascribed to their past actions, linking them in a causative relationship with the present depicted in a positive light.

(*zmarnowane sznase*). Most of them do not feel that they have reached a decent economic or social status. They feel that they are living an average or below-average life. They clearly blame their anti-communist engagements for such a state of affairs. At the same time, what works as compensation (and explanation) for such a condition is a sense of moral superiority connected to a notion of an 'honest and righteous life' (*godne i prawe życie*), which they believe they led. Being anti-communist, honest and righteous is understood as a reason for their lack of economic and general success. At the same time, economic success is being understood as a fake success, an artificial success, a success that does not hold a real value, as the real value lies in the moral stance. As such, the possibility of taking part in state and religious rituals as the main symbolic subjects of such rituals is welcomed as a public recognition of righteousness, a confirmation of those virtues, which the heroes/victims believe they possess. Most of the heroes/victims are people with conservative views. They believe in authority, in a life ordered by rules. They respect elites – priests, state officials, and those who are educated. They are regular churchgoers. They value reliability and the possibility of trusting someone; when such a relationship condition is achieved, they perceive it as friendship. Many of the members of the Association feel they are mutual friends. In fact, they are marked by a strong need for such a type of personal relationship, as they have a sense, greatly cultivated during communism, that their beliefs and life stories should be carefully entrusted, that very few people share their values, and that very few can actually understand their experiences, while many can betray, give away and disrespect. In this sense, the Church and priests are imagined as an anchor, a space to which the heroes/victims could have entrusted their sorrows. A chronic grudging and sense of regret has found outlets in confessional-type interactions, if not with Church agents, then silently with God in the form of a humble prayer.

The heroes/victims' sentiments and needs have been regimented through national and religious artefacts, in state and religious spaces, and through interactions with state and Church agents. The memory practice in which all of these actors have been engaged is one semiotic field in which bodies orient themselves towards one another in an interactive reproduction and maintenance of statism, military nationalism and institutionalized forms of religious life. The following image is an example of the orientation I have discussed.

The Martial Madonna

> 'Language and vision, word and image, text and picture are in fact deeply enmeshed and collaborate powerfully in assembling our sense of the real' (Morgan 1998:9).

During one of the commemorative celebrations, small reprints of an interesting religious painting -The Martial Madonna - were sold to the heroes/victims by the artist. The painting was sanctified by an archbishop during an unveiling of a monument and was assisted by an honorary campaign and a military orchestra on its way into a church on the altar of which it was centrally located. I wish to devote some space to this image, because it is a material manifestation of the alliance of the Church, nationalism and the heroes/victims, the image also empowers this alliance by producing the conditions for its internalization and objectification.

The Martial Madonna took as its basis a famous holy image of Saint Mary and Jesus called the Black Madonna, which was placed in the most celebrated Polish pilgrimage site – the Częstochowa sanctuary. During the wars with the Swedes in the seventeenth century, the Black Madonna became a well-known symbol merging the Catholic and patriotic values of *szlachta* (Polish nobility)[66]. A representation and, at the same time, a visual device of worship for the Holy Mary, widespread in Poland, the Black Madonna turned into a variously appropriated icon. Its reproduction was proudly worn by Lech Wałęsa during the *Solidarity* strikes in a form of a small badge pinned to his jacket, thus communicating his oppositional stance against the regime through an explicit demonstration of his religiosity. Memories mediated by this religious symbol have been layered throughout various periods, resulting in a complex and potent resource for further signification practices. These layers are visible in various versions of the painting and its different forms of symbolic representation are put into practice. In the painting, the Holy Mary is dressed in a military uniform with a white-and-red[67] band on her sleeve, while a little Jesus held by her carries a small military cap in his left hand. A piece of paper attached by the painter to reproductions of the image explained the symbolic complexity of his work. As elucidated, the artist was inspired by the memory of the people who opposed the oppressors of Poland in the most heroic ways, and the act of painting constituted an act of paying homage to the heroes/victims. The painter further explicated

64 *Polska szlachecka* is a recognized term in Polish political science and historiography referring to a political system that evolved in the Polish Kingdom [*Królestwo Polskie*] in the 15th and 16th centuries. It elevated Polish nobility – *szlachta* - in their rights, creating *democratic* standards by furnishing them with the power to elect the king. This period is often recalled in post-communist Poland, to point out that Poland has a democratic tradition going back much further than those of other European countries. Polish nobility was further strongly connected with the Catholic Church. On these grounds, the symbolism characteristic of that time is being taken up again in contemporary Poland, as it holds a potential for continuing along the lines of democracy and Christianity.

65 White and red are the colours of the Polish flag.

that the Martial Madonna 'combines the heroism of combat with the spiritual entrusting to the Holy Mary, who, throughout the centuries, has continually accompanied Poles. She supported them and carried hope, she was a commander-in-chief of the Polish army'.

The painting of the Military Madonna is a metaphor that relies on a series of analogies. It blends various meanings in order to create a new message. The *capacity of blending* is what characterizes metaphorical and analogical thinking (Kirmayer 2003). This commitment to *blending* achieved through metaphors and analogy expressed linguistically as well as through images tells of an *embodied mutual orientation* of the Catholic Church and the heroes/victims as it is repeatedly experienced through ritualized bodily practice. In the Martial Madonna painting, the artist juxtaposed a symbolic representation of God (Mary and Jesus) with a symbolic representation of heroes (military clothing marking their resistance), tying together the two types of subjects belonging to different orders (mundane and sacred)[68]. The Martial Madonna is a potent resource for metaphorical and analogical thinking. It may represent God, yet it may also represent a mother and, as a mother of heroes/victims, it may simultaneously signify Poland (the motherland), creating a condition for juxtaposing religious and national sentiments. Holding little Jesus, the Holy Mary may be read as an embodiment of care and protection. She is a suffering mother, as her son is to die crucified. As such, it may point towards a divine protection extended over the fighting heroes who, because of their suffering and devotion, are equated to Jesus - the ultimate symbol of Catholic martyrdom.

The Martial Madonna constitutes an example of a historically emergent cultural representation that exists as an element of a broader, dynamically enacted narrative concerning the Polish nation and its past expressed through, among other things, religious symbols and texts. The Catholic Church frames this narrative by granting a space where its maintenance, reproduction and growth takes place. A reproduction was bought by one of the members of the Association - Józef - and the Martial Madonna hangs on a wall of his flat, on which his medals and photographs from the underground army also hang. The Martial Madonna, as appropriated by Józef, underlined his belonging to the religious and national zone in which his hero/victim identity can be easily displayed. The image asserts that his anti-communist actions were not singular events but, on the contrary, were rooted in a long tradition of national suffering and heroism. It also acts as a reminder that the struggle has been oriented towards a common wellbeing, re-

66 D. Sapir argued that 'the metaphoric process is not a simple game of substitution, but rather a creative game with the pregnant interplay of two disparate terms' (Sapir 1977:32). Such an approach is adapted in this analysis.

stating its importance for nowadays. Eventually, by placing the Martial Madonna on his wall, a member of the Association revealed his loyalty bonds with the Church and with the new state-form, a position that legitimizes him as a hero/victim in turn.

Chapter Four
The Archbishop is not the Church! Talk in the Association as a collaborative moral action

> They had pride, and were sorry for themselves: all this meaningless profusion into which they had poured their blood left them no room to move. If that was all the laborious years left behind, then away with it. But next day they would start all over again, repairing what could be repaired, and what was beyond repair they would replace in five or ten years' time, with a new, better version, just as nations do after war.
>
> *The Case Worker* by George Konrad

> A primordial locus for the occurrence of events that are usually glossed as remembering and forgetting is conversation, people talking to other people.
>
> *Forgetfulness as an Interactive Resource* by Charles Goodwin

The news

It was early morning in December 2007 when 'Radio Maryja' announced the shocking news: one of the dailies had published the security files concerning Archbishop Wielgus who was just about to be appointed by the Pope to the post of Warsaw Metropolitan Archbishop. The voice of the Father Director echoed in the room: 'The journalists who manipulate the facts stand behind the attack upon the Archbishop'. 'These people have turned into a sort of death squadron'. 'A battle over Warsaw is taking place'. 'A death sentence – a moral death, has been announced'. 'How many people have they already set up this way, how many priests, decent people…' (Gazeta Wyborcza 5.01.2007). Throughout the following weeks, all the front pages were devoted to this case of cooperation. The accused, Archbishop Wielgus, who in the 1970s chose an alias, *Grey,* and was registered under such a pseudonym by a security officer, let the public discussion evolve without his voice.

The original publication contained photocopies of the selected files stored at the IPN. Nobody knew how the files had been taken out. The journalists of *Gazeta Polska*, who published the news first, did not reveal their source. The names of the security officers 'leading' *Grey* were fully disclosed and their reports cited. The Historical Commission of the Church, brought into being as an

answer to the "wild lustration" (*dzika lustracja*), publicly announced that 'there is no evidence that the Archbishop Wielgus cooperated' (Gazeta Wyborcza 5.01.2007). In its official statement, the Commission reminded its readers that cooperation with the repressive regime was forbidden by the Episcopate at that time. Further, it announced that Archbishop Wielgus himself stated that he had not hurt anyone with his words or actions. Despite this statement, the Commission concluded that it was difficult to determine whether the Archbishop had actually hurt anyone or not (Gazeta Wyborcza 5.01.2007). A more revolutionary voice in the Church, that of the monks, leaked into the press. Two monks made statements expressing a need for explanation of and confrontation with the problematic issues in the history of the Church: 'All Catholics deserve an explanation now!' (Gazeta Wyborcza 4.01.2007). Historians, the newly emergent experts on the issue of the security files' credibility, automatically focused on verifying the authenticity of the files and the fact that the documents did indicate the Archbishop's engagement in cooperation. 'For a person who looked through many similar documents, this is a model file of a secret informer', claimed an IPN historian (Gazeta Wyborcza 4.01.2007). Priests from the Warsaw archdiocese, on the other hand, published a letter in which they wrote: 'Groundless allegations and accusations not only menace the Archbishop's affairs, but are also aimed against the Church as much as against the nation' (*Lustracja…*).

One of the daily newspapers, *Gazeta Wyborcza,* published a poll announced by the title 'The Poles cross out Archbishop Wielgus'. According to their findings, 41% of Poles thought that the Archbishop should withdraw from office, and 73% suspected he would not; hence, he should be discharged by the Vatican. Sixty-seven per cent of the people agreed that those priests who had cooperated with the security apparatus should not hold high office in the Church's hierarchy. Forty-eight per cent would not go to confess to a priest who had cooperated. Forty-eight per cent were not concerned about whether the priest who had baptized their children was an informer (Gazeta Wyborcza 5.01.2007). Clearly, an event of this sort, made public through an almost ritualistic mode of disclosure, had produced a sense of community. Dissemination of mass media news provided a common topos that fostered in people thoughts and fantasies about the communist past and its relevance for the post-communist society. During the winter months, people in Marianowice often referred to the Archbishop's case – be it in jokes, in complaints, in comparisons, or in quarrels. While the theme of the Archbishop's cooperation was animating the whole country, I focused on the ways in which the heroes/victims were making sense of the shocking news.

Talk in the Association

This chapter focuses on a fragment of conversation that occurred in the Association of the Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Period in reaction to the news about the cooperation of Archbishop Wielgus with the apparatus of repression. A discussion on current political matters and mass media revelations is a commonly practised *genre* in the Association. Usually, such conversations take place among a few interlocutors. Sometimes, more than one discussion takes place at the same time, and animated voices can be heard simultaneously in different corners of the office. Stable groups of interlocutors emerged within the Association. This time, though, the conversation engaged everybody present in the office[69], either as speakers or as listeners. The active speakers in this case were men[70]. Of the speakers, the strongest participation status belonged to Leszek - the president of the Association[71]. The men who were members of his clandestine organization[72] normally align themselves with this voice, easily surrendering themselves to his authority. Other speakers try to push their opinions through and to take the position of competent speakers capable of influencing his listeners. Disagreements frequently occur during politically engaged conversations. Eventually, though, there is a movement from fragmentation of opinions towards their consolidation. In the course of political discussions, members of the Association enact their hero/victim identities and define their situatedness. The conversations usually involve the theme of the heroes/victims being endangered, which eventually moves the talk towards consolidation. The consolidation is achieved through the emphasis of a common fate and identity that needs to be preserved by the group effort. The singular exchanges occurring within the Association should be considered as conditioned by the larger institutional orders, which provide semiotic resources, direct the interactions and self-perceptions, and provide legitimacy for the claims expressed by the members of the Association.

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67 That day, ten people were present in the office - nine members of the Association and me.

68 Women hardly ever speak up on political matters. They stay silent during conversations involving many speakers, such as this one, and they engage in political discussions only among themselves, where they feel comfortable in expressing their views.

69 Most of the members of the Association can be classified as members of the youth conspiracy groups. Leszek displays his authoritative voice over such members. Only in relation to those members who took part in earlier forms of anti-communist activity (which implies most commonly the membership in the Underground Army or similar formations) does Leszek act in a submissive way.

70 Of the members of Leszek's clandestine group, only Marek takes part in this conversation.

The heroes/victims, who met in the office of the Association on Thursdays, were familiar with the news of the Archbishop's cooperation. The story constituted an incentive for moving between the past and present as if the time gap did not exist. It was as if the past heroism, victimhood and betrayal belonged even more to the present day, and were to be treated as soluble issues calling for a moral judgement that promises a final sanctuary from the uncomfortable anxieties produced by the past arrangements.

The analyzed conversation represents an interaction in which the speakers were variously positioned in terms of knowledge and the authority of their voices. Members of the Association are simultaneously members of other social groups and are variously aligned. As a result, they bring into the discursive event various sets of knowledge, which clash during the conversation. I argue that the analyzed discursive event was not intended to bring a negotiation of these various sets of knowledge and positions to a consensus. Its primary function was to give a space for enacting a hero/victim identity through a moral practice oriented towards recalling the past in a conventionalized and simultaneously highly affective fashion. Equally, despite differences in individual positions, the talk evoked a sense of groupness and confirmed the core values defining the community of heroes/victims.

The conversation to be analyzed was a type of free-flowing conversational interaction in which topics were not strictly predetermined and speaker turns were not pre-allocated[73], a good example of a *living narrative*[74]. The topic animated those who were present in the Association that day.

> Marek: Well, I felt simply *woeful* [said in a sad voice], I was woeful and tears came into my eyes that such a man was accused of such *infamy* [said in a sad voice]. I felt woeful. And apart from that, as a member of an illegal [laughing slightly but spoken more with pride] scout organization, who was imprisoned for three years well… we do know their methods…

Marek follows my question with an emotional evocation. He clearly displays his affective affinity with the Archbishop [*such a man*], and, almost immediately,

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71 I did not take the role of an interviewer; rather, I was treated as a regular member of the group, who comes to the office on Thursdays, and who has a lower competence – a rather *unknowing recipient* interested in accessing the expert knowledge of heroes/victims. In fact, only at the beginning of the conversation was I treated as an addressee. With the turn taken by Marek (I begin the transcript with these utterances), my position as a speaker vanished.

74 The living narrative is characterized by multiple active co-tellers, moderately tellable accounts, relatively embedded in surrounding discourse and activity, non-linear temporal and causal organization, and uncertain, fluid moral stance (Ochs and Capps 2001:23).

points towards a similarity in positionality of both the accused and the members of the Association. Through the insertion of a fragment of a personal narrative [*as a member of an illegal…*], Marek emphasizes his sense of belonging to a hero/victim category. In this narrative fragment, this category gains the coherence of a collective agent through a reference to the existence of another group – the security apparatus [*their methods*]. The pronoun '*we'* indicates imagined bonds of affinity linking all victims of the security apparatus. Marek includes in this group Archbishop Wielgus. Here, language plays the role of a cultural instrument in a larger political process of the group formation, as it delimits the position of the group vis-à-vis other groups. Opening the discussion, Marek proposes a moral evaluation of Archbishop Wielgus's cooperation in which he refrains from focusing on the allegation, drawing instead on the similarity of the Archbishop's positionality to that of heroes/victims, underlining that both agents dealt with the security forces. Given Marek's feelings of respect for a member of a hierarchy [*such a man*], such juxtaposition simultaneously works towards a positive display of his hero/victim self as someone positioned similarly to an important figure belonging to spiritual and intellectual elites, serving as an index of eliteness[75].

> Adam: [speaking in a very low voice] The fact that he resigned from office is unquestionable. And here, I wish to connect to what was said that, namely, that we know these methods. We know these methods, only that we, we know them from a different position [said as if giving a technical lecture]. We were imprisoned; we had no, ABSOLUTELY no rights. And at that time, to resist the pressures, it was a sort of… risk, because we could have borne enormous consequences. […] at that time it was an immense sacrifice to RESIST. And most of us approached these things in such a manner […]. The priest Archbishop was in a different situation. He, by complying with a certain type of conversation, or even by signing something, he had some sort of personal gains resulting from it. Some of these gains concerned him personally, and some concerned the Church. In the later years, when he was a chancellor of the university, he gained benefits for the university. In this case, *in a sense*, I absolve him, but he should have tried to resolve this issue *much earlier* [said with disappointment], not at the moment when he is accused of cooperation [said as if rationally explaining a usual situation] […] He should have resigned earlier so that Catholics, like *myself,* would not have had to feel embarrassed.

75 The majority of the heroes/victims I met in the Association come from peasant or workers' families. Those among them who graduated from universities (and this group is not large) or who achieved high office are treated with great respect when compared with the rest. The sense of subjugation felt by the heroes/victims stemming from their poor backgrounds is coupled with their trust in such values as education, authority and social position. Simultaneously, being an authorized hero/victim is their way of achieving social advancement.

Adam shifts the *footing*[76] and repositions the heroes/victims vis-à-vis the Archbishop and the apparatus of repression. His sequence starts by confirming the hero/victim ingroup identity as reliant on common past experience of relations with the security forces. At the same time, however, he points towards the asymmetry [*we know them from a different position*] between the Archbishop and the Association members and builds his statement by focusing on this difference. Such orientation allows him to display the uniqueness of the hero/victim experience. In this narrative, he points out *the conscious and pure sacrifice* that the heroes/victims performed while resisting. In contrast with such a definition, Adam draws a picture of the Archbishop as situated outside this group due to his orientation towards *gains*. The discrediting notion of *gains* is further detailed by the differentiation of *personal* and *public gains*. *Personal gains,* according to Adam, exclude one from a broadly understood community of heroes/victims, while *public gains* can save one's face and lead towards recognition of one's suffering. Still, Adam clearly defines a hero/victim identity by underlining a full commitment to a common good (*dobro wspólne*), a pure sacrifice (very similar to the model of Christ suffering). Eventually, Adam once again positions the Archbishop as an outcast, this time by referring to the community of Catholics. Adam proposes viewing the Archbishop as one who violated the norms of the Catholic community by his lack of commitment to *disclosure*, a notion quite close in meaning to *confession*. In this logic, if one violates the norms, one is required to admit it vis-à-vis one's community. The lack of such disclosure results in a double offence.

The heroes/victims' participation in the memory politics and practices of recognition positions them within a frame in which other competitors for a hero/victim status become highly visible[77]. Such agents can be perceived either as

76 Goffman introduced the term *footing* in order to analytically highlight moments in communicative social situations when a speaker and/or a hearer shifts alignments in relation to the events at hand or to the subject matter of an exchange. A change in footing implies a change of interpretative frame used in reference to events or to subject matter. The footing depends on the production/reception format and participation status of the actors (Goffman 1981). In this conversation, the frequent alteration of the footing is an expression of the relative instability of the heroes/victims' self-understanding and the sense of insecurity stemming from the lack of stability of a single representation of the communist past and democratic present. It is further caused by the fact that the version they support in their daily associational routine is often being undermined in the mass media, as well as in their more private lives. This causes doubts in them and pushes them to find various venues of rationalization for the past events.

77 This chapter has been greatly influenced by Marjorie Goodwin's book on the construction of social difference and exclusion within schoolgirl groups. Methodologically, Goodwin focused on the interaction understood as a complex semiotic act. Through her

an ally, a resource (see Marek's utterances), or as a competitor (see Adam's utterance). In the first case, we observe a strategy of alignment while, in the other, the strategy of distancing is being used. Slowly emergent in the post-1989 conditions, *memory practices* imply interactive construction of a moral code encompassing, in a coherent framework, behaviours stretching out between the past and the present. Because new facts and allegations, as well as new possibilities for verification and recognition, are constantly emerging, the engaged actors are faced with a constant need for moral positioning, which constitutes at the same time an opportunity to delimit one's position in the network of relational power. Importantly, context and talk stand in a *reflexive relationship* (Goodwin 1987:120)[78] in the case of the analyzed conversation. The talk evolves in the context of association, which impacts upon the elaboration of relevant characteristics of the speakers and those spoken about. Importantly, the participants interact with each other regularly; hence, they adhere to and take for granted larger relationship patterns that bind them together. At the same time, they reproduce emergent narrative orders. They use their social identities of heroes/victims to solve the local moral issue of the priest's cooperation. Such usage implies maintenance work and the enactment of such a collectively elaborated identity.

Anna: What was this embarrassment about? […]

Adam: It was surely about the behaviour of this man, that all of that appeared in a public context […] it is US who could have used such CROOKED ways -

Marek: During the interrogation, because it was our *right to defence, our right of defence* -

Adam: Or we stood with hands up facing the wall, they take you for an execution, and later on they are in stitches.

Marek: These are the forms of psychological breakage of a human being [as if reading a description under a photo].

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analysis, she depicted minute nuances of social interaction, which constituted larger mechanisms for defining the ingroup and outgroup of the girls' social world. Among other arguments presented by Goodwin, one seems particularly relevant in the context of the Association. Analyzing the girls' interactions, Goodwin revealed the tabooed aggressive underside of the girls' world. She claimed that there was a need for recognition and power to ignite competition and conflicts within the group (Goodwin 2006). Similarly, the conversation presented in this chapter should be read partially as an expression of competition and conflicts conditioned by the need for recognition, and partially as a tool for consolidating a unified hero/victim identity, which grants such recognition.

78 Charles Goodwin explains the idea of a reflexive relationship between talk and context in the following way: 'the talk invokes relevant contextual features that are then used for further elaboration of both the talk and the relevant characteristics of the participants involved in it' (Goodwin 1987:120).

Adam continues with the strategy of distancing by pointing to the difference between the Archbishop's public position implying responsibility vis-à-vis Catholic believers, and the heroes/victims' more anonymous situatedness. Both Marek and Adam convey highly personal narratives by classifying their experiences [*the forms of psychological breakage*] and recalling snapshots of it [*we stood with hands up…*]. These utterances also constitute performatives of their hero/victim identity[79] vis-à-vis other heroes/victims, themselves and me. The possibility of publicly displaying one's identity by recalling one's experience without risking disapproval is an important component of being a hero/victim within an Association. The highly personal fragments of narrative, in fact, determine the forming of memory schemata as they work towards a selection of memories, which, through their frequent access and emotional loading, are fitted into larger politicized narratives. A conversation on political matters within the Association always evokes pieces of personal narratives/memories unintentionally integrated into talk about contemporary matters. The institutionalized construction of a hero/victim identity requires the authentication of past experiences perceived as an indisputable basis for 'being' a hero/victim. The context of the Association hence naturally constitutes a place for displaying this identity, turning a subtle recall of personal past events into instruments of one's self-validation directly or indirectly nested in doxa produced by Church, state or academia. The cultural form of association works towards the nesting of the autobiographical memories of its members. This occurs through the facilitation of the systematic and repeatable integration of personal memories into stable frames that connect one's experience with larger socio-political frameworks through acts of interactional interpretation of both past and contemporary events.

> Jerzy: So, I am thinking, looking at our society's profile, that still today we have such IDIOTS, who do not know how this world works. Because there are such, who at this moment can say not only 'let communism be' [*bądź komuno*], or they *frankly adore Stalin – our Poles!* [as if he could not believe it] So I am thinking this way – he was young, when he started that cooperation -
>
> Adam: He was ten years older than we were [said with a sort of satisfaction].
>
> Jerzy: Older than us, yes. Well, no older than me I suppose.
>
> Adam: He was ten years older than us when he started to cooperate!

79 Following J. Austin, we shall consider words beyond their immediate meaning as *performatives*, seeing them as forms of social action (Austin 1976). Similarly to J. Butler (1997), I analytically capture the agency in the processes and instances of its enactment. These instances of enactments I see as enabled and conditioned by the semiotic resources. In this ethnographic case, the agency simultaneously produces and perpetuates the availability of the projection of the self-cultural repertoire.

Jerzy: Perhaps he was -

Adam: At that time older than us when we were facing [the trials] –

Jerzy shifts the footing of the conversation by introducing a negative comment on Polish society. He feels irritated that there are still people who recall communism with nostalgia. The offence [*such IDIOTS*] generates a form of exclusion that situates the heroes/victims above others, as those who have access to the right perspective, evoking again a sense of eliteness. The knowledge possessed by the heroes/victims is interpreted by Jerzy as a binder for the group identity. It also puts the group in a position to form moral judgements. After these general opening comments in which the position of the heroes/victims is established, Jerzy turns to the Archbishop's case [*he was young when...*]. He opens a new line of defence by referring to the Archbishop's age. However, Adam powerfully resists such a footing by continuing the strategy of distancing through comparison. He insists on a framing in which heroes/victims are displayed collectively as those who shared experience of political violence at a very young age, much younger than the Archbishop had been. Jerzy's sceptical remark exposing his possible separateness from the group is being powerfully dismissed by Adam, who reaffirms the coherence of the group by persisting in his usage of the pronoun *we*.

Jerzy: We do not know these documents. It is difficult to… give a straightforward judgment, because we do not know THE FILES in detail, what is written in them, what he could have done, whom he could have sneaked on, no?

Adam: De facto, HE DID NOTHING.

Jerzy complies with a marker of group identity, but he shifts the footing by evoking the theme of the files - another attempt at defending Archbishop Wielgus. The files in Jerzy's statement are represented as the ultimate proof of one's sin, as a means of verifying one's moral positionality. Turning to the topic of files indexes the ways in which the macrosociological reality of institutional centres such as the IPN and, previously, the apparatus of repression impacts and forms microcontexts and everyday discursive events. The reference to that semiotic centre, in which files are being organized and interpreted, generates resources for forming judgements and alignments. Jerzy, by highlighting the lack of access to the files, blocks the process of definitely excluding the Archbishop. In Adam's turn, he suddenly presents the Archbishop as innocent. After using the Archbishop's story for an excessive display of a hero/victim identity, Adam shifts the conversation by providing an interpretation of the Archbishop's cooperation as harmless.

Jerzy: *Well, if he did nothing but signed only* if he did not hurt anyone… well, then it is difficult to judge, if he did not hurt anyone. Well, then he should have confessed

> – who could accuse him then? Well, I did it because I wanted to go abroad, or I wanted to study [said as if these were normal dilemmas] etc. It could have… It should be -
>
> Alojzy: Well that is what he said, that *for the Poles he did not do any harm* [said a bit nervously]. This is how he can be understood.
>
> Zygmunt: In my opinion, as a man he had an OPPORTUNITY – there was a POPE who WAS A POLE, he *could* have trusted him and he could have told him. Apart from that, he was a PHILOSOPHER and an ETHICIST and he behaved as who? - a stupid peasant would not behave like this. He should have confessed. That he did something WRONG for POLAND or for the CHURCH, *I do not believe* [said very firmly]. He MUST HAVE done that so as to rescue the university. But *he did evil* [said with disappointment].

In this fragment, members of the Association move away from treating the fact of cooperation as purely negative, inviting a differentiation between cooperation that brought harm to somebody, cooperation that did not, as well as advancing a notion of *confession* understood as a morally proper action in the aftermath of cooperation. On the one hand, the Archbishop's cooperation is being normalized [*Well, I did it because…* said in a regular tone], and even justified [*He MUST HAVE done that*]. For a group in which many of the members were forced or persuaded to cooperate with *the* apparatus of repression, this strategy seems to create a necessary space of inclusion for those who seem obvious outcasts, but who are nonetheless core members of the group. Such space is being delineated by detailing the seemingly shocking notion of betrayal. Distinguishing its various forms makes some of them more acceptable. Among the heroes/victims, various forms of cooperation could be traced from the files. There were already some cases of disclosure within the group. The members of the Association have been working out a mode of accepting the acts of cooperation committed by their colleagues. The most valued procedure is a confession undertaken in front of the group, with the penitent asking for forgiveness and providing explanations. People who are known to have committed acts of betrayal are accepted within the group, but they are not allowed to hold official positions in the Association, as they are not considered morally disposed to do so. Nevertheless, these people are still nominated for medals or military promotions, which would suggest that a confession of betrayal becomes a group secret, not to be exposed even to members of the memory alliance. The notion of public confession has been worked out as a morally valid solution, allowing one to be accepted as a hero/victim despite one's past deeds. However, the associational engagement in the state-authorized structures of recognition feeds the competition and ignites ingroup conflicts. As there are numerous factions and groupings within the As-

sociation, conflicts do emerge based on the various treatments of cases of betrayal, and acquiring recognition by the people who cooperated.

Once the fact of cooperation is discovered, what matters is what one does with it in reference to one's own community. In the fragment above, the heroes/victims index their and the Archbishop's belonging to both Poland and the Catholic Church, and they argue that Archbishop Wielgus has violated the well-being of these communities. By discussing the necessity for confession in the Archbishop's case, and condemning the lack of it, the heroes/victims collaboratively establish a moral code for their ingroup. Zygmunt, through insults [*like a stupid peasant*], draws a distinction between the educated elites and regular, poorly educated people, further implying that the acts of cooperation should be regarded as more permissible among the heroes/victims and highly reprehensible among the elites that rule the country.

> Zygmunt: In reference to Bishop M. [another priest], as I know this case well – that the Bishop M. together with a director aka bloody MAMA […], and during her term, three professors were poisoned, so, during her term this house for the priests on the other side of the street was built. It was ONLY THANKS TO HER, and she later became a Minister of Education -
>
> Adam: Vice-minister -
>
> Zygmunt: Minister… vice-minister? Well, before, she was chief of propaganda in the voivodeship office, and then a school headteacher -
>
> Adam: I know her personally -
>
> Zygmunt: (you know, this woman)
>
> Adam: (I had control) over the dentist surgeries and (that's how I know her)
>
> Zygmunt: (and already at that time), they were accusing Bishop M. of having a friendship with her, for sipping *coffees together, for this and that*… well, it is difficult to say… As for myself, I do not know. I think that if it had not been for these sorts of close relations, then for sure that building… […]
>
> Jerzy: Well, that they maintained these sort of relationships, I think that these were NECCESARY, because, certain kind of issues... –

Introduced by Zygmunt, this new story of Bishop M.'s relations with a communist official builds a new possibility of accepting instances of cooperation between the Church and the agents of communism. This acceptance is based on a notion of *gain,* implying benefits earned for a religious community [*that building*]. This fragment works towards the normalization of Archbishop Wielgus's contacts with the secret police, and its acceptance from the position of a member of a religious community.

> Leszek: But Zygmunt, there is a different issue in here, because I know the story of a church-building in Palot. Priest G. […] you should have seen how he was travelling around and arranging. Only that he was always taking a bottle of good cognac and a bar of chocolate, well, more than one. First, he was talking to the secretary at the voivodeship committee, and through her, he had an entry to the proper authorities. He was travelling around and meeting the chiefs of construction sites, because the architects were working for free... but this does NOT MEAN that he had to sign something.
>
> Zygmunt: *I am saying the same thing*.
>
> Leszek: And we should not confuse one thing: if they write in black and white [his finger tapping on the table], if a miss journalist is reading to me on the Polish Radio saying that I have it in the Internet so, indeed, because the TV have shown his signature. This is not all, because here is an important thing, [.], that he, as a secret informant, signed the commitment to THE INTELLIGENCE service – this is unit – not 4, but 1! The *most filthy*! [with indignation].
>
> Zygmunt: *So, this is what I am saying* [said as if to confirm that was what he meant previously].

Leszek joins the conversation with a new story in reply to Zygmunt's contribution. This story, seemingly similar to Zygmunt's [*I am saying the same thing*], performs a very different function. Leszek depicts a canny priest who, during communism, was able to arrange, through informal contacts with the communist authorities, the building of a church - an unquestionable benefit for the believers. He shifts the footing, though, by furnishing the story with an unexpected conclusion, which links back to Archbishop Wielgus' case [*but this does NOT MEAN that he had to sign something*]. Leszek intuitively elevates the significance of the files and signatures as unquestionable proof of commitments that are not acceptable in moral terms [*he, as a secret informant, signed the commitment*]. In so doing, he suggests that the rules, which create a possibility of a firm moral condemnation in the light of actions, are blurred and difficult to categorize. He points to traces that are impossible to deny, the exposal of which simultaneously indexes Leszek's alliance with the bureaucratic actions of his oppressors, the existence of the IPN, and the state-like forms of defining a hero/victim identity.

> Leszek: It would all be fine. Now, the priest C. or the priest H. were all saying – we were, that was not true! Adam! We are looking through our papers, I have not managed yet, but my colleague from the trial. Roman, and a colleague over here, they have these documents and THERE, there is A PILE OF DENUNCIATIONS [as if revealing the most important thing].
>
> Igor: *Yeah*. [sighing with disappointment]
>
> Leszek: And now, let someone tell me that these denunciations were IRRELEVANT! What does that mean they were irrelevant? Because, if we had such, as Car-

dinal Wojtyła! His file is there, but his file is *clear* in this regard! [said with satisfaction but also in a very official-like manner] […] And all of a sudden the Archbishop 'breaks' and till THE LAST MOMENT he is saying 'no', he denies.

Zygmunt: *So this is exactly what I was saying!*

Leszek: And only from then on, the case reached the Vatican, and, I know, because he admitted it, that there were pressures coming from the government, but HE admitted it only when the gun was pointed at *his head*. And I do not believe that he resigned himself but that he simply was DISMISSED BY THE VATICAN -

Zygmunt: *Oh, of (course this was the case!)*

Jerzy: (THAT'S WHAT IT WAS!)

The attachment to the documents produced by the security apparatus is caused by the fact that these files have been experienced by the heroes/victims as effective instruments legitimating their hero/victim identities in authoritative spaces [*there is A PILE OF DENUNCIATIONS*]. Leszek inserts fragments of his and his colleagues' personal experience to again denounce the Archbishop and to simultaneously display his and his colleagues' hero/victim identities. Using the notion of *denunciation,* he equates Archbishop Wielgus with the informants who surrounded the heroes/victims in prison and in their everyday lives during the communist period. To sharpen the moral tone, he brings in the story of John Paul II and his *clear* files. This story functions as a comparison and an example of proper moral behaviour. Clearly, Leszek exposes the similarity of the heroes/victims to the Pope and excludes from this moral community Archbishop Wielgus, who not only cooperated, but also denied his cooperation, thus failing to commit himself to a purifying act of communal confession.

Leszek: (And all of this happened at the last moment. We) had a different example given by our colleague – we know whom I am talking about, right, he confessed, he is! *I believe, because* [as if talking about a close friend] in his activity it was a tiny matter! A different thing when a metropolitan Archbishop…

Again, Leszek delineates the rules of moral behaviour by referring to a story of a member of the Association who confessed to his colleagues that he had cooperated. This act granted him the acceptance [*he confessed, he is!*] of his close circle of friends. At the same time, though, Leszek continues to construct Archbishop Wielgus as deviant, by displaying the difference in positionality of their colleague and the Archbishop, who holds *a position*.

Zygmunt: The ethicist

Leszek: A future PRIMATE! Well, (*my beloved people!*) [with indignation]

Adam: (and a CARDINAL) in the near future, as he was already foreseen […] -

Leszek: And it is not about… there is no operational file, because these operational files, we know, thanks to Mr. Kuroń, Mr. Michnik etc. [his fingers tapping on the table] all this circle of *so-called people of honour* [irritated], these files were burned.

Marek: 95% of the files were burned!

Leszek: NO, not 95%. It depended on which voivodeship office they belonged to, where they managed to burn. And this is the point! And FOR ME, I do not *see a connection with the Church!* [very convinced] After all, knowing a little bit of history, we had a primate, he was called primate S. […], who did all sorts of tricks with Russians, because it was exactly the period before the partitions! […] we know – t*he Kościuszko upheaval – we know how the bishop was treated – he was hanged!* [nervously] […]

Jerzy: Yeah!

Adam: The (Warsaw one.)

Leszek: (Yeah!) -

Jerzy: Yes.

Zygmunt and Adam join Leszek in a moral action of discrediting Archbishop Wielgus on the grounds of his positionality in structures of power. As a person of high social status, he is believed to be more exposed to moral demands. For the heroes/victims, the notion of *an office* is associated with authority, and authority is understood as necessarily morally faultless. Leszek shifts the footing again, though, by going back to the subject of the files. The performative function of his utterances is, for the most part, about the display of competence and knowledge. The files are exposed this time as a scarce resource, which was put in danger by immoral agents who burned most of them, concealing the truth. In the same turn, Leszek brings a strong conclusion to the conversation, with which other members of the Association align themselves. He introduces a clear differentiation between the Church and the actions of its agents [*I do not see a connection with the Church*]. Confusing this line of argumentation, he brings in a new story reaching back to the 18th century; the intention is to display the Church's continuous opposition to Russian oppression, proving that the Church is encompassed as an ingroup following the same unchanging moral code based on resistance to foreign oppression.

Leszek: BUT HAS THE CHURCH COLLAPSED? (NO!)

Zygmunt: (No) *and it will not collapse!*

Leszek: THE ARCHBISHOP that… what's his name…is not the Church!

Me: Wielgus

Leszek: Wielgus.

Eventually, the position of Archbishop Wielgus is negotiated as deviant yet comprehensible and, under certain circumstances, permissible, while the heroes/victims' alignment with the Church is confirmed by distinguishing between the Church and its sinful agent. Most importantly, though, the conversation worked towards an interactive and affective display of a hero/victim identity involving personal narratives and recollections, as well as highly evaluative judgements that indirectly granted recognition to the members of the Association.

The conversation focusing on Archbishop Wielgus's cooperation constituted the interlocutors' combined efforts to establish a consistency between their identity and the mass-mediated event conflicting with the myth that legitimized them. Its emergence in the associational context clearly strengthened the orientation of the speakers towards a display of their hero/victim identities during the conversation. Equally, it is this context that enabled such talk. The sequential order of the conversation was formed by the interlocutors' mutual commitment to the production of a social moral order binding the members of the Association. Turns taken by the speakers comprised a negotiation process simultaneously functioning as a confirmation of their social status and collective identity. The stories emergent within the Association were often momentarily transformed into narratives of personal experience. The practice of interrupting the story formed by the conversation is considered by the speakers an appropriate continuation of a prior discourse, even when a straightforward connection is not obvious to a recipient of the utterance or to a wider audience. These interruptions to the story function as crucial vehicles allowing the exposure of one's personal experience as a hero/victim and receiving feedback confirming that this experience is recognized as an integral part of the group's story[80].

Talking, as a situated and embodied action, is one of the forms of social behaviour through which cultural norms are established, maintained or renegotiated. Through a conversation on the news concerning Archbishop Wielgus, the heroes/victims positioned themselves vis-à-vis the priests' cooperation, claimed their moral situatedness through comparison, and delineated the lines of moral action by situating some agents in the *ingroup* and others as outcasts. The uncertain and fluid character of the conversation indicated how, within the Association, members display various perspectives on such borders. The talk hence rep-

80 E. Ochs and L. Capps define *relatively embedded narratives of personal experience* as being 'recounted over turns of variable length, remaining thematically relevant to topic under discussion or activity under way'. Personal narratives may perform various social actions. They may 'illustrate a point, make a comparison, support an argument, or otherwise elaborate a focus of concern' (Ochs and Capps 2001:37).

resented *morality* in the making, a negotiation of judgements decisive for social alignments born out of a mental and verbal movement between past and present accomplished interactively.

Silverstein argued for the existence of historically contingent, yet structured, 'wider-scale institutional orders of interactionality' functioning as 'centres of semiosis' which structure discursive events with respect to the meanings and significance of the verbal and other semiotic forms used in it (2004:623). Throughout previous chapters, I have focused on elucidating the importance of the IPN, historical writings, the Catholic Church and various materializations of the state as crucial *centres of semiosis* creating the conditions for experiencing a hero/victim identity in contemporary Marianowice. The analyzed centres of semiosis are considered in this book as having a structuring effect on the interactions that take place within the Association, as well as on individual self-perceptions. In this chapter, I focused on a single discursive event that I perceive as structured by the speakers' alignment with and orientation towards the mentioned *centres of semiosis*. The relation between the institutional orders, the group, and the individuals is complex, reciprocal and open. As noted by Blommeart, the cultural conceptualizations generated in such centres should not be treated as randomly attributed (Blommeart 2005:73), as they are conditioned by larger structures. On the other hand, though, following Silverstein, it is important not to abstract such conceptualizations from the dimension of interactionality (Silverstein 2004) in the course of the analysis. This chapter, through its analytical focus on the *real* talk, and through the positioning of this material after the analysis of the institutionalized orders, aimed at capturing the structural order in the interactional making.

The analyzed conversation had stemmed from a reaction to the mass media revelation of a Catholic Archbishop's cooperation with the communist security services. It had taken the form of a *genre,* commonly practised in the organization, of a joined discussion on current political matters. This chapter argued that this conversational *genre* constituted a form of moral practice through which the boundaries of the group and alliance were (re)defined in a reaction to a news item threatening the sense of conventionalized order, as described in the previous chapter. This order should not be understood as static or self-validating but as prone to alterations. The minute types of interaction should be recognized as crucial for the maintenance of its coherence and adjustment to the changing conditions of its social durability.

Chapter Five
The Space of Ambiguity: between the collectively enacted frames and the experience of the self in time

> This everyday life was arranged […] then it was restored […] perhaps just because of an amateur artistic impulse that the facts of life should be nicely arranged – it sprang up in the gaps, in the mistakes, in the method itself, touchingly authentic and alive.
>
> From The Museum of Unconditional Surrender by Dubravka Ugrešić

Individual appropriation of collectively achieved frameworks

Frequently, during my fieldwork, I asked myself about the impact of the public commemorative events and the historical policy on their most prominent subjects – the heroes/victims. The longer I spent in the field, the more attention I paid to the feebleness of the authorized version of the communist past and the uncertainties its enactment evoked in the heroes/victims I met in the Association. The bulk of the literature on trauma focuses on the role of the collective modes of legitimization and narrativization of the traumatic past, arguing that the larger memory projects lead to the successful individual incorporation of the difficult past from the position of a victim. This chapter highlights the ambiguity of life experience and difficulties in remembering communism from the authoritatively defined position of a hero/victim. I turn my attention towards the heroes/victims' thoughts and affects, which proved discordant with their feelings of gratification derived from the condition of belated authorized recognition. The distinctiveness of this ethnographic case is constituted by the condition of belatedness of the memory project as experienced by those of the heroes/victims who lived through repression during the Stalinist period. For most of the members of the Association, the institutionalized recognition came after many years, during which they and their relatives had to work out ways of integrating the difficult experience into the interactively negotiated and stable knowledge structures.

This section deals with a man who, back in the 1950s, formed a clandestine anti-communist group of teenagers, the members of which were arrested after the murder of a state official. During the investigation and trials, the boys were treated as traitors and public enemies. Despite obtaining emotional support from their families, they were often assured by their relatives and significant others that their behaviour had been irresponsible. Sentiments of resentfulness cumulated both within the families and among the group members themselves, who "lost" a few years of their young lives in jail. In a few of the cases, encounters with the apparatus of repression implied testimonies and actions that implicated denunciations or open cooperation, which generated a sense of guilt and repugnance towards the self. For most of the group members, their political involvement gave them little chance of social advancement in an adult life lived under the communist system.

The access to the semiotic resources enabled by the emergence of the authorized myth pushed the heroes/victims towards an intensive reworking of the images of the self and of the communist past in reference to their engagements with this frame. Their involvement in the memory project carried significant implications for the individual autobiographical memories and ordering of self-schemata. In this chapter, I explore a moment of change in an individual life, when the emergence of a new constellation of power relations gave birth to new resources, which have fed individual interpretative efforts and fostered the restructuring of self-understanding situated in time.

Making the self in time and context

Cognitive psychologists understand the self as a system of constructs (schemata) treating about the self. Lawrence Pervin defined schemata as a knowledge structure responsible for organizing information (Pervin, John 2002:532). Such knowledge structures determine the ways in which people perceive and react to new information. Within knowledge structures, Markus distinguished self-schemata as being responsible for processing and selecting information relating to the self. These schemata influence the intensity of interest in new material related to the self, the ways in which it is related to the past, the ways in which it activates the memories, and the ways in which it structures expectations about the future (Marcus 1977). The knowledge structures related to the self provide an individual with a sense of coherence of the self over time, as well as with an understanding of one's relations with the world. They further condition the interpretation of new information, fitting it into the existing interpretative frameworks.

The previous chapters comprised the analysis of social contexts in which various actors orient themselves towards the accomplishment of the historical policy projects. These contexts are highly relevant for the reconstruction of the autobiographical memory of a hero/victim, as they create the condition of repeatability and provide legitimacy for the memory framework into which personal material is fitted. Autobiographical memory constitutes an important part of the self-schemata, as it organizes the self-referential knowledge derived from the experience of the past. Cognitive psychology defines autobiographical memory as a way of organizing self-referential material based on the individual experience stretched out in time, as well as on the individual frameworks of self-perception. Memories are said to be 'nested' (Neisser 1994) in particular social situations that guide their recall and rehearsal. This means that individual memory constructs are context-dependent. Past situations are selectively recalled and fitted into a particular image of the self as well as shaped according to the social circumstances of recall. Conway argued that autobiographical memory is highly flexible, pointing out that different methods of access may lead to sets of memories with different properties (Conway 1990:45). The heroes/victims in their associational context have interactively formed methods for producing memories with particular properties. Through the repeatability of the social contexts constituted by the associational meetings, commemorative events and patriotic masses, a model image of a hero/victim has been established. These repeatable contexts of memory politics should be understood as methods of access leading to a set of memories that are similarly structured.

Individual participation in the institutionalized and public processes of commemorating the communist past implies the heroes/victims' exposure to and active appropriation of the semiotic constructions that define the communist past, the democratic present and the agents of change. The heroes/victims' involvement in the memory project is partially an involvement in the process of essentializing the representations applying to themselves, implying the emergence of new conceptualizations and, hence, fostering reformulations of the already established self-schemata. Their engagement in the associational activity created a condition for the excessive exposure to cues and stimuli for recollection in relation to the socially constructed frameworks, as well as for a frequent usage of these frameworks in the process of remembering the past. As a result, recalling the past in the Association should be considered an interactively achieved action oriented towards ends, such as achieving an individual sense of belonging, or a sense of retribution, or the receipt of a special veteran's pension – all crucial for an individual sense of comfort. As the availability of the past is socially structured (Schudson 1995:359), individual acts of remembering performed by those heroes/victims who have participated in the memory project

have been structured according to a conventionalized scheme partially enabled by material objects. Monuments, official documents, images, historical records, films and books function as 'repositories' (Schudson 1995:351) that direct the ways in which the members of the Association remember the communist past and construct self-images. Because the current memory project emphasizes individual choice and heroism, as well as the dignity and significance of individual suffering, the heroes/victims' processes of remembering the communist past in the context of involvement in the memory project are highly self-referential. This self-referentiality implies recognizing oneself and one's deeds as crucial for the larger collectivity and as morally superior. On a psychological level, it implies intensive work in the sphere of organizing the self-knowledge. Participation in the memory project hence provokes some levels of reordering of the self-schemes. The new framework is not always complementary to the previously-used frames. It requires the heroes/victims to focus on their past selves and make these self-images relevant and fitting in the present-day context.

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of an individual case of a hero/victim and the consequences of his involvement in the memory project for his perception of the self and his processes of remembering. Such an angle will allow the analytical exposure of space between the collectively achieved meanings and representations and the process of their individual appropriation. For, as noted by Peter Callero, the most informative analyses 'are often those that link together historical shifts in the political economy, changes in particular social settings, and critical alterations in self-experience' (Callero 2003:122).

Leszek

Leszek, the president of the Association of the Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Period in Marianowice, was born in the small village of Koluszki in 1936. His mother was brought up in a peasant family, as was his father. After they got married, in the late 30s, his father took a job as a worker in a metallurgy industry in a newly established industrial town, Statek, built in the middle of a forest. This is where Leszek's sister was born and where the Second World War found them. Back in the 1950s, as a teenager, Leszek formed an anti-communist group of young boys fascinated with scouting and the armed forces. The organization evolved from an innocent children's game into the more serious planning of actions of sabotage and killings. Following the murder of a state official in Leszek's village, the group was uncovered by the secret police. A thorough investigation drew most of the members of the clandestine group into tricky interrogations. Teenagers were sentenced to years of imprisonment in show trials and

sent to detention centres. As the group's leader, Leszek was sentenced to death. He spent fifteen years in jail, where he was exposed to numerous investigations and extremely harsh conditions of detention. After being released, he worked among the technical staff at the state railway company. He attempted to reintegrate with his clandestine group. Yet, never again during communism did he get involved in any serious anti-communist activities. Echoes of Leszek's past activity surfaced unexpectedly every now and then in the realm of intimate social relations. A pretty girl's father would not allow her to date Leszek. A colleague in a bureau treated him oddly after the security officer had phoned him at the office. Despite numerous love affairs, Leszek never got married. Through the years, he worked in the same company, producing technical drawings in a bureau. He now lives in a small town, in a tiny flat he used to share with his mother before she died. Leszek's dearest relationship has been the one with his sister, who nonetheless has her own family and cannot devote much time to cherishing their friendship. After retirement, he devoted most of his time to reliving his youth and returning to the old fascinations. This process of the intensive reliving of his youth was facilitated by his engagement in the associational form, emergent in the post-communist condition. With no family life to occupy him, he has been spending most of his time recording TV documentary films dealing with the Second World War and its aftermath, and collecting materials about his own trial and other people's encounters with the repressive communist system.

The Railway Tracks

On the 8th of April 1953 at 9 am, a woman testified at the Koluszki militia station:

> On the 8th of April 1953 at around 5 in the morning, I was going to work [unintelligible words]. Passing the rail tracks, I noticed a railway guard lying in a ditch, with his cap lying in the road, near the tracks. The stationmaster came out and tugged him by the coat sleeve to make him stand up. I hoped he was drunk. [Source: IPN]

The man was dead nonetheless. Three witnesses testified hearing two shots on the 7th of April around 9 pm, one following the other at an interval of 2 minutes. The police doctor found 2 cuts, 1 stab wound and 3 contused wounds to the head of the deceased, and three stab wounds and 4 bullet wounds to his chest. The doctor declared that these were definitely caused by the external action of a stranger(s) [Source: IPN]. Since the murder involved a state functionary, the case became of interest to the regional secret political police unit. It was not until a few months later that they accidentally found a clue leading them to the sixteen-year-old Leszek. When asked by the interrogator about his knowledge con-

cerning the murder of a railway guard in April 1953 in Koluszki, he gave a long and detailed testimony:

> As a founder of an illegal organization […] which in 1953-1954 turned into an armed military group[81], there came up a question posed by me about acquiring firearms so as to arm the organization. Sometime around 16 of March 1953, at one of our general meetings, in the presence of the members of our organization [he names them], I posed the question of acquiring firearms [.], even if it was by a murder of a militia functionary, relatively, by a murder committed on railway guards in Koluszki. At that time, Staszek and Jurek got an order from me to check, at the rail tracks near Koluszki, at what time the railway guards pass through there heading towards the stand guard at the bridge on the River Maple, approximately one kilometre from Koluszki. The next day, Staszek and Jurek went close by the railway station in Koluszki and noted that, around 8.30-9 pm, the fully armed guards were heading towards the stand guard at the bridge on the River Maple, and they gave me a full report about it. Afterwards, Staszek and Jurek went a couple more times to check the punctuality of the guards […]. One day before the murder, on the 6th of April 1953, Jurek and I went to the rail tracks 1 kilometre away from the Koluszki station. We walked towards the railway bridge. It was evening, around 8.30. We were armed with a P38 gun, which I owned. We were going to check in person whether these were the hours around which the guards were coming on duty. […] Since, on that day, we did not meet a railway guard […] after waiting for some time, we left for home. Walking back, we met a guard at the railway tracks. However, Jurek, as he later confessed to me, purposely turned my attention away from the guard, because he did not want me to attempt to disarm him in his presence. On the next day, and I remember it in detail since this date – the 7th of April 1953 - became imprinted on my memory very well, during the afternoon, I set up a meeting with Miron, a member of our illegal organization. We were to meet at 8 pm that day at Koluszki railway station and we were to assassinate the railway guard heading towards the guard stand at the River Maple. At that time, we talked over our ground plan, meaning that I would take a P38 gun owned by me, and he would take a knife, a so-called sheath knife, which could be of use in case of an expected defence on the guard's side. Exactly at 8 pm, we met with Miron at Koluszki railway station and, with both of us armed – myself with a gun, he with a sheath knife - we moved on above the track lines from

81 The difficulty with using the files produced by the security forces as sources, especially the ones that constitute the transcripts from interrogations, is connected to the act of rephrasing people's testimonies while noting their words. As much as this issue is typical for a situation of interrogation performed in any political system, during communism, the security officers also worked towards politicizing and jargonizing many innocent contexts. In the transcript from Leszek's interrogation, an uncertain authorship is visible from the very beginning. 'As a founder of an illegal organization' is most probably a phrase learned by Leszek during the interrogations or imposed by the officer who interrogated him and who rephrased Leszek's words. In the heroes/victims' files, such examples reoccur in more and less subtle forms.

the station towards the bridge on the Maple River. […] On the left-hand side of the railway tracks, near the level crossing, we hid in the spruces close to the tracks, with a purpose of camouflage, and at the same time in order to get away from the rain. We were waiting in the spruces, and not long afterwards there arrived at the Koluszki station a slow train […] which arrives at 8.30 pm. When the slow train from the Koluszki station left towards Statek, we went out from the hiding place and walked towards the Koluszki station along the rails. Afterwards, we stopped between the third and the second level crossing - counting from the Koluszki station - and there we stopped next to the rails on a path. At a certain point, there arrived from the direction of Statek a goods carriage heading towards Koluszki station, and it stopped in front of the semaphore, not arriving at the station, so that the last cars of this train stopped just in front of us. At that moment, we walked at a slow pace towards the railway station and, I, on our way, checked the gun to see whether there was a cartridge loaded in the barrel. When we were approaching the second level crossing […], at that moment, a delayed train from Matrok towards Statek started. At the same time, and even simultaneously, the train that stopped in front of the semaphore started and was entering the Koluszki railway station, so both these trains were passing in front of us […]. When these two trains were passing each other, at the same time, an armed railway guard was passing through the second level crossing at which we were standing. He was heading towards the bridge from the Koluszki direction. Then, I turned to that guard face to face, simultaneously, I threatened him with a gun owned by me, and yelled 'hands up!' The guard answered to my call 'I am one of yours'. The guard, seeing my gun aimed at him, which I did not release for a second, clutched his machine gun and, while loading a cartridge into the barrel, he was trying to point it at us, so as to force us back. At this moment, I fired at the guard, who was standing in front of us, aiming at his chest. When I tried to fire again, to the already staggering guard, the gun did not fire. I heard the mentioned guard groaning with pain, staggering. Being afraid that the guard, after one gunshot, might still have been alive and able to recognize us, I grabbed his machine gun and pulled it out of his hands, giving back, at the same time, my gun to my murder accomplice – Miron. When I was pulling the machine gun from the guard's hands, Miron stroke him a blow on the head with the gun, as well as wounding his head and back with a knife. These blows brought the guard to the ground, yet, still without losing consciousness. At that moment, using the collected machinegun, I fired towards the kneeling guard, aiming at his chest. When we committed that murder, we started to run away, taken by the fear of meeting someone. […] That evening, I did not leave the house for a second as I was taken by the panic and trepidation caused by the committed crime [Source: IPN][82].

82 It is important to note while reading the interrogation material that Leszek does not speak here completely in his own words. The most striking example is the expression 'my murder accomplice – Miron', which most certainly resulted from an official situation in which Leszek's words were noted by the investigating officer.

Although this account was given by young Leszek to a representative of the repressive apparatus, well-known for its harsh methods of interviewing, the description of the murder as included in the files is very similar to what was passed on to me in the fragments of Leszek's and his colleagues' stories. After over fifty years, Leszek remembers every detail of that event. Rather than accessing a veridical account, however, it seems more plausible that he is continuing to repeat the version of these events that he rehearsed so many times during the interrogations and the trial. The recoverability of this version has been strengthened by the possibility of accessing the security files gained by the heroes/victims, along with the establishment of the IPN. In the case of Leszek, the Institute created the conditions for reinforcing the individual memory constructs in accordance with the ways in which the past was recorded in the files. The files have been read and discussed by Leszek and his group of friends. They have been copied, distributed and hidden in drawers in their flats. Finally, the files have been used as a source of legitimacy, describing the political aspect of the murder and its significance[83]. In fact, the murder was usually omitted in the accounts given to me by the members of the clandestine group. The emphasis was on the anti-communist activity that did not involve physical violence but, rather, symbolic acts of resistance. As a visitor to the Association and the interviewer, I had to wait a few months before gaining access to the dispersed and fragmented narratives dealing with that event. I believe that the tabooing of any mention of the murder within the heroes/victims' group has been the result of conditioning, apart from the sense of uncertainty about which I wrote in the previous chapters, by the formerly available frameworks for interpreting that event. These frameworks were discordant with the new framework of memory politics. Back in the fifties, none of the group members lived through that event and its consequences in a straightforward manner as if it had been pure heroism and a conscious sacrifice. The teenagers lived through the trauma of murdering a man, and they were eventually condemned by the repressive apparatus and the court, the village and the school environment where they lived; they were also marked down as enemies of the local and national communities who needed to be punished. The testimonies given to the security officers were obtained through meticulous interrogative methods. The enemies of the "new" Poland were needed for propaganda purposes and this group constituted great material for the front pages. Such conditions strongly influenced the ways in which the members of the group interpreted their actions. The investigation, the trial, and the reception of their activity in the social surroundings cast doubts on

83 It is worth realizing that, if Leszek's group had not been uncovered by the security apparatus, there would have been no possibility for its members to gain a hero/victim status in the post-communist Poland.

the purposefulness of their actions. Now, many years later, they often say - 'So it turned out, we were right, after all'.

During the fieldwork, I found it peculiar that people in the Association were not eager to give me a straightforward account of their political engagements. This was the case despite the milieu of authorized recognition that surrounded them. During the first months of my visits to the Association, the members of Leszek's clandestine group initially answered my questions by showing me their veteran's IDs or by giving me book references. Later on, I started hearing iconic stories of youth resistance and sabotage. Meanwhile, I read the security files on the organization and the investigation of the murder. Eventually, after a few months of associational meetings, I started to gain a clearer picture of what had happened in the past, and what sort of ambiguous feelings the murder and its consequences evoked in people who had belonged to Leszek's conspiracy group. Initially, I learned that it was an important conspiracy group that fought for big ideals. Week by week, though, I began to hear fragments of a mysterious story about a murder. As much as the first and only murder committed by an organized group may produce feelings of uncertainty in its members, in the case of Leszek's group the emotions and relationships became further complicated by the circumstances of the arrests and the abuse committed by the security apparatus. It became clear to me that my fieldwork covered a moment of deep transformation of an interpretative script that these people used in reference to the past events in which they had been engaged. The memory project required them to build their hero/victim selves based on that past event, which evoked in them equivocal feelings. The new script unified them around the common story emergent in the relationship with the larger national and historical narrative. By focusing on Leszek's case, I shall try to bring to light the socially conditioned, individual, emotional and semiotic journey between the variously conditioned past and the present.

The war. The fascination. The imaginary.

> "Post-German" was the term we used for everything the Germans had left behind: furniture, books, houses, streets. My childhood was full of it. I lived in a small village called Glebokie near Szczecin. A walk to the woods could yield a whole range of fascinating objects: mines, guns, pistols, grenades. They were my childhood toys.
>
> From Post-German, Post-Jewish by Leszek Szaruga

The Second World War had an immense impact on children's imagination and the shaping of their normative notions. Charles Taylor explained social imaginary as 'the way people imagine their social existence, how they fit together

with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations' (Taylor 2004:23). This section aims to illuminate the way in which the conditions of war shaped the social imaginary of Leszek's group. I believe these conditions facilitated a common understanding and practices, and gave the members of the group a shared sense of legitimacy for their actions. The tangible scenery of war drew the contours of normalcy and the realizable in the young boys' minds. I sketch this picture in order to show a contrast with the concise historical accounts on which Leszek and his colleagues based the reconstruction work in the realm of the self.

The fascination with ammunition was normal among boys of Leszek's age who lived in his village. I came across one of the most evocative representations of this fascination in a collection of security files devoted to Leszek's anti-communist conspiracy group. Szymon, a member of this group, wrote in his diary in the 1940s, at the age of fourteen:

> I was born in the village of Roztop […] on the 30th of January 1934. My father worked on the railways. In 1935, I left together with my family for Santok, where my little brother Mark was born. In 1936, we left for Koluszki where I still live today. Here, I started to attend a primary school. During the German occupation, Dad was still working on the railways, while I was pleasantly spending my childhood. In 1939, our little sister Wanda was born. When the war broke out in 1934[84], together with my family, I had to run away to the village of Torsk next to Skawin, where we waited for the front to move, and after that, we came back home. Everything we found was in chaos and disordered. That evening, together with my brother, we went for a stroll and to check the damage. It was full of German corpses, draught and domestic animals were everywhere. The old headquarters of the Gestapo as well as the ghetto were full of ammo and firearms and hand grenades. In a couple of spots, there were trashed tanks and tankietki left, and on the railway tracks there stood carriages. One day, together with my brother, during a stroll through the tracks and carriages, we found a car full of rifle cartridges. I started to bring them home. I managed to bring in a lot of them, yet in vain, since my father, once he noticed them, took them away and tided them up. However, Stefan, my colleague, had also brought this ammo and buried it in a cartridge-case, behind the cellar, not far from my house. At the end of the summer, when the things got settled, my friend Stefan found a shell, fortunately without a head and he started to disarm it in my, my brother's and my little sister's presence. All of a sudden, an explosion was heard, and when the smoke went up, I saw my little sister without legs. Immediately, some people and doctors arrived. The army provided a car and she was taken to a hospital in Suran, where she died during surgery. She was four and half years old. After that, life went on in a routine manner. […] I was commuting to school together with my colleagues. At that time, I started to think about ways in which the Soviet Union, pretending it wis-

84 Of course the date is mistaken. The war broke out in 1939.

> hed to consciously bring in peace […] was actually gradually taking over the power[85] [Source: IPN].

This terrifying story of a tragic death of a young family relative was narrated in a bone-dry style. The manner of the event's narration is particularly striking if we consider that the story was recorded in a personal diary hidden from other people's eyes. Actually, nothing indicates that the intention of the author was to reflect upon the sister's death. The event was marginalized and incorporated into a larger reflection and a set of recollections about the war and its aftermath. Another important factor that the story highlights is the author's exposure to a politicized discourse at a fairly early age. The last phrase of the fragment - 'At that time, I started to think about…' - points out the strong internalization of the circulating and mass-mediated politicized contents, the fragments of which were also overheard from the adult world of that time. From this and other life narratives of members of Leszek's conspiracy group, it became clear to me that there had been no parental support for their clandestine organization. Rather, there was fear and resistance to it by the family members. The drastic example of Szymon's sister's death was not an isolated case of great family suffering brought about by the boys' involvement in the clandestine organization and games played with the ammunition. After years of war, the overwhelming mood within society could be summed up as a craving for normalcy. For the families of the members of Leszek's group, the boys' organizational involvement meant the prolonging of emotional instability. In fact, all of these boys, now the aging heroes, carry within themselves sentiments of regret over their heroic deeds and a sense of guilt towards their families for the suffering they caused. These feelings are tabooed nonetheless. Within the families, their years of imprisonment were perceived not as heroism but as a real loss and pain, which had little logic apart from being children's irrational games. Most of the members of the group were brought up in poor peasant families, who had been counting on their sons' ability to support their households. It was for this lack of responsibility that families reproached their belatedly politically-engaged sons.

The boys' involvement began as a game and gradually evolved into a more serious organizational endeavour. It started not from a conscious patriotic stance aimed at halting the communist expansion but from a fascination with war and its manly, military aspects. Even today, most of Leszek's stories of WWII sound like the adventures of a young boy mesmerized by what was happening around

85 The text is a fragment of a diary confiscated from Szymon's family home by the state security forces. It was secured as investigative material used during interrogations and for the final formulation of the charges. Currently, it is located in the IPN archive in Szymon's file, accessible to academics, journalists, and Szymon himself.

him. Leszek retains very vivid recollections of the war. Clearly, what was happening fascinated him. The lack of a thread indicating feelings of fear in this story reveals a sort of immunity to the wartime conditions, which, despite their dreadfulness, brought excitement. The intensity of the war experience was a pivotal factor shaping Leszek's personality, fostering his craving for adventure.

> And the Soviets entered Koluszki… there is such a story to be told. Koluszki, the level crossing… railways… […] and I am walking along that consignment, along those rail tracks, through the goods vans, and I am looking around. I am searching for ammunition of a sort, but there was only the artillery one, and I was not interested in that, since I was not able to carry it under my armpit. Anyhow, this one is not safe… […] the trucks are running along the sort of embankment, so I walked down to it, and, I will tell you, it is also a sort of sensation… I look, and there are two crossbones till the knees here [pointing at his knees] covered with a sort of sack – a body, torn feet. He looks as if he was roasted. And then, you know, I was only walking further, I did not stop.

The paths of young boys in Koluszki run through the forests, ditches and railway tracks. What motivated them was ammunition, which they collected. Each piece they treated like a trophy. The more they brought and showed to their colleagues, the more esteem they received. The encounters with the drastically maimed bodies were reported to the group. The act of telling about them reduced their dramatic impact upon the young psyche, as these stories simultaneously aggrandized the weight of the trophy. Today, in the associational office, the men sometimes excitedly recall 'bags filled with ammo', which they carried on the trains, coming back from faraway forests visited after school. The materiality of the war, which organized their boyish time, stretched beyond the military remnants. The boys bore actual witness to large-scale atrocities, as they lived in proximity to a concentration camp. This place also elicited curiosity in them.

Fascinated by the war and its military aspects, Leszek often talked about war as if it were an 'immense project' involving many people and amazing technical solutions. Leszek developed a militaristic way of thinking about the war. He still collects anything connected with the history of the WWII western countries' navies. He knows a great deal about the armaments and various armies that took part in that war. In his tiny flat, there are drawers of books. There are just a few titles separate from the main collection of the history of WWII and its aftermath. The space of the Association allows him to display this knowledge, thus gaining him the esteem of his fellows.

Leszek's youth was marked by the lack of a father, who was murdered by the Germans[86], as well as by the marvels of war that captured his imagination. The actions he took in his youth followed a particular line of evolution, and they were recently iconized into an image of patriotic contribution to national liberation - an image incorporated by the majority of the group members who are still alive and who belong to the Association.

The emergence, in the small Polish village of Koluszki, of this youth conspiracy group coloured with political agendas was gradual, and had no direct and clear external incentive. The idea was born in teenage minds and started up quite innocently from the fascination with armed forces emerging from the predominant and overwhelming landscape of war. No direct transmission of patriotic traditions took place within families, or at school[87]. The pivotal place in the performance of the group belonged to Leszek's personality and his search for adventures and distinction. It was a matter of historical contingency that the resources he used for self-realization had an anti-communist overtone. As a little boy, he looked up to the German soldiers, who took him for rides on their motorbikes. A soldier became his male role model.

Leszek worked out the directions for the actions of the group. He convinced his teenage members that there was a vast organizational structure above them whose orders they were required to carry out. Copying various operational and organizational strategies he read about in books, Leszek gradually surrounded

86 Despite this fact, Leszek reveals a great deal of fascination with Germans and their military style.

87 During the investigation Leszek allocated a great deal of responsibility for the emergence of his group to his history teacher, who was clearly anti-communist in her views. From his and his colleagues' present-day accounts, however, it is clear that she had no idea about their clandestine operations. The security officers directed Leszek to testify against her – to blame her for propagating anti-communist ideology among the youth. She was imprisoned, and her health deteriorated in jail. Ironically, today's historiographic discourse again turns the teacher into someone co-responsible for the actions of the group. Teachers such as this one are essentialized in historiographic representations as the carriers of real national spirit, like those silently revolting against the communist occupation by propagating the real Polish values in everyday life. This time, the co-responsibility brings about recognition. Leszek facilitates this version by propagating the teacher's pivotal role in his political engagement. I believe involving the history teacher into a grand national narrative is, for Leszek, a way of recovering from a heavy sense of guilt he has felt for her unjustly broken life, which, in his eyes, he had caused. The grand narrative of communism allows Leszek to gradually depart from this sense of guilt. This is the case, because this interpretative scheme is shared by his colleagues, who had previously felt that their teacher was an innocent victim of Leszek's testimony. Currently, they reinterpret the facts in the light of the purposefulness of the past actions.

himself with items on the ground (notebooks, books, maps) and under it (arms and ammunition hidden in various lairs), worrying his mother whenever she found one of them. His performance at school worsened as he devoted most of his time to the creation and leadership of his secret squad. What speaks to me from the data I gathered is not a conscious collective and patriotic struggle for independence, but an individual desire to live through something groundbreaking and to become a frontman for a group action[88]. The data also shed further light on the cultural resources available to young people at that time for their self-realization.

Representations of a hero/victim

When the Marianowice branch of the IPN organized an exhibition devoted to the theme of repression committed by the state security forces on the members of the anti-communist partisan groups, the last few panels were dedicated to the wave of youth conspiracy that surfaced after the war. After a number of panels devoted to the underground army soldiers who, as part of a large political structure, were repressed and violently eliminated by the communists, two other panels could be viewed; these represented youth clandestine organizations that lacked a larger organizational umbrella. A group of four young boys posing for a photo with a machine gun and a supply of ammunition was depicted in one of the black and white photos in the exhibition room. Another panel included a photo of a young man in a scout uniform, a photo of him taken by the security for a police profile, anti-communist inscriptions on a wall, and an anti-communist leaflet. The phenomenon of the youth anti-communist activities taking place in the post-war conditions was represented as a natural continuation of a conscious fight for independence and freedom. Simultaneously, the photos representing young conspirators were to render visible the cruelty of the communist system, which repressed children.

When I talked to Leszek about the exhibition, his overriding reaction was to mention a photo of himself that he had in his drawer at home. In this photograph, Leszek holds a machine gun, and Miron, a boy from Leszek's group, who participated in the murder of the railway guard, holds a pistol. The photo was taken by a security officer. The boys were given the weapons and asked to pose for a photograph. 'Just like that photo at the exhibition', Leszek explained to me, revealing the sense of legitimacy he derived from the IPN display by associating

88 Leszek failed to become the commander of a group of pioneers supported by the school and communist authorities.

the photo on the panel with the one in his private archive. In more informal talks, Leszek has been told by one of the IPN historians that such photos were taken when the security officers were planning a show trial for a youth group, and that such photos had provided a back-up for the political propaganda. The passing on of this information, which, in Leszek's case, worked towards strengthening the heroic image of the self, proved that Leszek's clandestine activity had not been marginal. Such self-referential messages derived from authoritative sources have helped Leszek depart from the image of himself, evoked in the past, as irrational, selfish, childish, mistaken, or a bandit.

At some point during our meetings, Leszek gave me as a souvenir a recently published book consisting of biographical notes portraying the members of the Association of Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Period in Marianowice. Leszek was introduced in the book in the following words:

> Son of Jan and Weronika from the Marzec House born on the 4th of July 1936 in Koluszki. A founder and a member of an organization fighting for independence named 'the Secret Association of Polish Scouting' in which he was actively engaged from March 1950 till when he was arrested by the state security apparatus in Jedlno on the 8th of July 1953. He was a group leader alias 'Emperor' […]. After a six-months-long investigation led by the state security officers in Marianowice, he was accused [three lines of relevant paragraphs and codes follow here[89]] […] and sentenced to death by the verdict of a court […]. The death sentence was changed to 15 years of imprisonment in 1954 […]. In 1956, due to the amnesty, his prison term was diminished to 10 years […]. He was conditionally released in 1959 […]. He currently holds the presidency of the Association of Former Political Prisoners of the Communist Period in Marianowice[90].

89 There are a few codes and paragraphs typically used by judges during the Stalinist period and enacted especially for prosecuting people holding different political views. The trials were often staged to give their participants a sense of absurdity. Members of the Association of the Political Prisoners of the Communist Period know these by heart and do not have to use full names to explain the charges. They know who among them fell under what paragraph. In a sense they are all experts in knowledge of the apparatus of repression created by the previous regime and in the legal cases along with their sentences.

90 This vignette constitutes an example of a cultural form adapted by the Association for the purpose of representing its members. Its structure was established by a historian, who is a member of the Association, in cooperation with other members of the Association. The vignette introduces members of the Association through their political involvement, preferably an active engagement in an anti-communist formation, and a mention of their experience of communist repressions certifiable by some sort of official steps taken against these people.

Leszek's biographical note included in the book became the most important script about the self that Leszek had available, when I met him. The book became one of the cultural vehicles that furnished a fragment of Leszek's past with a political significance relevant for today's reality, encouraging his devotion to the image of a hero/victim self. The representation of Leszek's life story as given in the book is characterized by a specific distribution of the emphasis and the logic of the selection of facts, which feeds a national grand narrative. Bruner argued that mere facts should not be considered viable until they are categorized, while live facts should not be probative until they can be shown to be relevant to some sort of theory or story dealing with something more general (Bruner 1998:18). The narrative has a power to govern the selection of facts and, by the same token, to shape these facts, as they are selected (Bruner 1998:22). By bringing together the vignettes of people who suffered political repression during communism, the publication intended to underline the collective aspect of repression and the immense value for the entire national community represented by the suffering of the people described in the book. This representation is necessarily concise and rigid, as its aim is to tell various life stories as if they constituted slightly different versions of the same script.

In a succinct manner, the vignette describes certain facts scattered over a nine-year period of Leszek's life. The information given focuses on his anti-communist activity and the repression he experienced due to his involvement in organizing and running a youth conspiracy group. The emphasis in this representation is on citing the legal codes and files, which constituted an authorized decision about Leszek's repression. The murder of a state official, which was the reason for Leszek's arrest, was omitted. The main thread of the vignette was constituted by Leszek's anti-communist activity and the repression he suffered. The main aim of the book was to present the heroes/victims by their names, photographs, type of anti-communist activity they had been involved in, and the repression they had experienced during communism. The concise way of representing Leszek's life is employed to serve the needs of the national myth. Bruner urged 'that we not be too easily tempted into thinking that there is an oppositional contrast between logos and mythos, the grammar of experience and the grammar of myth. For each complements the other […]' (Bruner 1959:349). As much as the national myth has provided models for moulding the images of the hero/victim selves, we should recognize the role of the heroes/victims in the preparation of the material used for the composition of these particular vignettes and other publications. In fact, the book was made possible thanks to the data collected and stored in the internal filing system of the Association. In this sense, the myth has been experienced and the experience has been mythologized.

One of the most crucial messages such volumes carry for the heroes/victims is a demonstration of the collective aspect of their individual experience of suffering and resistance to communism. This sense was lacking at the time of their anti-communist involvement. The number of entries in the book proves that the experience of the individual hero/victim was not isolated. Yet, the decision to represent each individual separately is meant at the same time to underline personal courage and exceptionality. The focus on the bureaucratized aspect of the repression in the form of fixated presentation of sentences, paragraphs, and detention centres serves to expose the deliberate and inhumane policy of the communist regime against the courageous ones. However, it simultaneously strips away the fact that 'experiences attended by powerful social institutions are likely to be better preserved' (Schudson 1995:359), and are widely represented through authorized channels. Such publications work towards strengthening the bonds between the heroes/victims, who learn one another's' biographical notes by heart and cultivate a sense of commonality of their experience. Yet, they also become cultural artefacts from which those generations who did not experience the communist past will fabricate an image of it.

Another important publication based on the data collected by Leszek's Association and on the interviews with the heroes/victims, including Leszek, was written by a local historian, a hero/victim and a member of the Association himself. The book serves as a study of the anti-communist youth organizations formed during the Stalinist period in the Marianowice region. The main thesis of the book claims that there was a noteworthy anti-communist youth movement in the 1940s and 1950s, which should be understood as a conscious fight against the Soviet occupation – a fight that was at the same time an exposure of the hidden dreams of the entire nation, and an embodiment of 'pure patriotism'. This youth movement, according to the author of the book, should be understood as a continuation of the Polish tradition of the fight for independence and an unwavering spirit of resistance to foreign oppression. The author enumerated the origins of the movement, in which he included national traditions, values transmitted through the family, school and the Catholic Church, subversion of traditional scouting into communist pioneer groups, and the all-encompassing hypocrisy of the communist system. As the author put it: 'This generation of young, distinguished, magnificent people of those years marked their place in the history of their beloved Fatherland in the most beautiful manner possible. Since, what could have been a more beautiful sacrifice than giving one's life for the Fatherland, or devoting to it one's most beautiful years of life, completely lost' (anonymized source).

The book became one of the most important sources for Leszek and his colleagues in terms of the processes of reconstruction of their image as a group, the

history of its formation, and its relevance for the history of the nation. Two modes of representation of the youth conspiracy during communism played a role for the heroes/victims who were involved in it: the argument that the youth conspiracy was a nationally significant movement, and the emphasis on the continuation of the anti-communist struggle by the underground army undertaken by young Poles after the war. The members of Leszek's clandestine group have not always been sure of themselves in terms of the purposefulness of their engagements in the clandestine organization. Nor have they always been convinced about the righteousness of their cause. The sources supporting the argument for the existence of a large youth movement have been particularly significant for Leszek who, in his desire for leadership and adventure, kept lying to his young colleagues back in the 1940s, pretending that there had been a huge organizational structure above them from which Leszek had been secretly receiving orders, which the rest of the group was obliged to carry out. Among such orders was the murder of the railway guard ultimately carried out by Leszek and Miron[91]. Eventually, after their arrests, the teenage members of the group felt regret and sometimes bore feelings of resentment at Leszek. As Leszek's colleague told me in a conversation, "Leszek nonetheless turned out to be a genius. He had a much wider horizon than the rest of us, while we doubted his righteousness". What is now presented as a conscious patriotic deed was at that time surrounded by a range of emotions and interpretations that do not fit the current framework. The murder and the subsequent arrests, interrogations, trials and sentences initiated a multifaceted grudge against Leszek among his conspiracy group and the families of its members. It was shocking news for the village, which, almost in its entirety, condemned the group and wanted to isolate it to avoid "contaminating" the rest of the young people[92]. Leszek himself, during the interrogation and during the trial, had a few regrettable moments of weakness. One of his most regrettable decisions was to place the blame on his dear history teacher, who was eventually arrested and sentenced. This is one of the reasons why being a hero/victim is not so straightforward for Leszek.

91 Miron went through a serious breakdown during the interrogations and while in jail. This led him to co-operate with the security officers, for which he was despised by the group members. Leszek, who has been insisting on recognition of his heroism, visibly feels guilty for what Miron lived through. Leszek's pressure for official recognition of Miron has faced criticism within the Association.

92 Even today, Leszek's group is remembered in the village as irresponsible banditry. The occasions on which Leszek has faced negative hints concerning his past from the village inhabitants have always evoked in him emotional upheavals. The members of his group do not expect that their monument will be erected in the village after they die.

The book in which Leszek's vignette is included is entitled "The Adamant Soldiers". The rather telling dedication that Leszek wrote for me on the very first page, "For Miss Ania, from a soldier who has not managed to be adamant at all times", reflects his internal hesitation over discrepant images of the past-self and his struggle to build a coherent image out of the two.

Coherence beyond the self in time

The memory project as described in this book was organized in order to bring an interpretative closure to the communist past on a societal level. For individual heroes/victims, becoming involved in the memory project meant an opportunity for achieving a legitimate closure to one's story of political involvement. The interactively achieved plot (ordering of events and establishment of causal relationships between them) of the brave national struggle for liberation organized into a coherent storyline that stretched between the past and the present implied "grasping together" scattered individual stories and events, schematizing, and ordering them (Ricoeur 1984:x). The memory project, as it has evolved since 1989 in Poland, should be recognized as a collective sense-making process. The master signifying framework has offered a fairly comforting solution to the perplexing and confusing past events, but it has simultaneously flattened human experience by omitting those elements that did not make sense within the prevailing storyline. Dealing with the incongruous elements has been left to individuals who have had to rework interpretations of the self in accordance with a larger frame, which they have been co-producing. This interpretative work implied the re-ordering of memories, assimilating them into the new, prevailing schemata[93].

Individual desire for integrity and a need to achieve a coherent image of the self implies that the self may work towards the creation of memories that are self-consistent rather than veridical (Conway 1990:88). This implies that descriptions of the past may reflect what a person believes (s)he should know about the past rather than what the past actually was. Hence, the memory constructs ground the self in such a way that an experience of conventionalized representations constrains the range of possible self-knowledges held by the indi-

93 I do not want to give an impression that the memory framework emergent after 1989 was a completely new agenda. It certainly built upon previously achieved cultural resources and symbols. However, in terms of the people engaged in the realization of the new memory project, the access to the interpretative resources has been variously structured. The case I am describing in this chapter provides an example of a person for whom the memory project constituted a new quality for interpreting his life.

vidual self (Conway 1997:5). A full understanding of ways in which self-knowledge is structured requires a broad conceptualization of context that extends beyond the immediate social situation and encompasses larger historical and cultural settings (Callero 2003:121). In the case of the heroes/victims, the transition from one state-form to another implied a change in the social and political conditions for interpretation of the self and one's past actions in the light of the present. The political change opened up a process of appropriation of cultural tools for understanding the self in the new political context.

Reflexive subject doubts

Yet, as much as the curving of individual self-conceptions and images of the self are structured by larger historical forces and power relations, remembering the self is also a reflexive interpretative labour. This chapter deals with the process of re-ordering one's memories understood as the consequence of involvement in the politicized memory project and about the difficulties in dealing with a situation in which the new, strongly desired, framework (a heroic self) proved discordant with the previously available frameworks for interpreting (an irresponsible self) the past and the self. It focuses on individual attempts at reworking the self-stories in accordance with the new cultural frames. Such an effort is understood as a reflexive process focused on sustaining a sense of stability (Callero 2003) and coherence of the self and the world. Among other forms, this effort manifests itself through narrative (Ochs, Capps 2001).The study presented in this chapter focused selectively on a few elements of Leszek's life narrative and their entanglement with larger socio-historical processes of memory politics and historical records.

The remaining section of this chapter will serve to give a sense of individual moves between the traumatizing events, the description of which had already been nested and systematically rehearsed in various past social situations, and their belated integration into a grand national narrative. Previous frameworks for interpreting the event caused, in Leszek, a sense of guilt and uncertainty about the righteousness of the self. While the memory project has worked towards the production of "unstigmatized identities" (Antze, Lambek 1996:147), Leszek has oriented his efforts to eliminating the stigma from his self-schemes and to fully incorporating the new frameworks, based on retrospective attribution of causality, that displace guilt and responsibility (Antze, Lambek 1996:147). The historical transformation generated inconsistencies in the realm of Leszek's self-knowledge. According to George Kelly, the incoherent system of constructs makes individual functioning difficult, as it generates negative emotional states

such as instability and anxiety (Kelly 1991). At this point in his life, Leszek's system of self-constructs is characterized by inconsistencies that generate in him depressing affects.

Verbalizing ambiguity

The 'accident with the railway guard', as Leszek calls it, meant the end for the thriving group of brave teenagers. This bizarre wording, the usage of the noun 'accident' in relation to what is now recognized as a clearly political and brave action, points at other, still active, interpretative frameworks available to Leszek for understanding his past activity. One late afternoon during my visit to his place, Leszek confessed after a moment of reflexive silence:

> Leszek: The question is, damn you! Why did you fire for the second time? I also have been reflecting upon it. Ania, it was an impulse… it was an impulse, it was something, what a human, you know, you can't… this is how I have been imagining it. It was an impulse. A sort of self-preservation instinct, devil knows. And you know, this gunshot – totally pointless, because the guy would live […]. It could have been one way or the other, since they could have got a hold of us…
>
> Me: Did you have pangs of conscience?
>
> Leszek: Well, I surely had, Ania, and to this day, it is a sort of ambiguous situation. I mean, you see, there is one thing – it was a combat. This is how I, how we understood it. At least I lived through it and understood it this way. There is one book which had an incredible influence on, I have it in here […] written by a Russian author… it is a story of a Russian colonel, an NKWD squadron leader. This squadron was defending Moscow […]. You know, it is fantastically described. Because it is about contemporaneity, a man, when he reads it, he is uncritical. This is good in the Soviet army, these methods of conduct, but not… in a regular life. I realized it only later. And you know, it was written in there that, well, a combat is a combat, an order is an order, an adversary is an adversary and you need to destroy him, irrevocably, you know. A lot… because the lawyer [he is talking about his lawyer] […] so it was also him who highlighted, because it was being said in there about books, what books… and this book, I am not saying, but this book, perhaps it had an influence, I do not know, on my behaviour, you know, a sort of reaction towards various issues and colleagues – because it was connected to the case. And here, you see, how one can, himself, how to say it, get oneself up. Afterwards, a young man can easily be moulded. Here is an example to follow, because we [he refers to the Polish nation] have been always losing, always losing, we never could have gained what was needed, we got something for twenty years and we lost it. And here, you know, something made me rebel… that [he smacks] it went on somehow flabbily, that we are afraid of fighting openly, well, the history of France, of Russia, of England, whe-

> re all those things were conducted ruthlessly, there, you know, they went to all lengths. […]

This narrative fragment illustrates Leszek's search for justification. It is difficult for him to classify the killing of a railway guard as a heroic deed. By talking about the books he has read, and about his uncritical reception of their content, he brings into the narrative an interpretative framework used by his lawyer as a defence strategy during the trial. Apparently, he often used this framework while reflecting upon his own past. Yet, following the expression 'Here is an example to follow', Leszek drops the previous framework in order to switch into the newly available framework in which his actions can be interpreted as a heroic, patriotic fight for the freedom of the oppressed nation.

> Me: And when did you start to have doubts?
>
> Leszek: Well, you know, initially I had no doubts. I thought it was well done, there is nothing to worry about, it is a war […]. Only later I started to reflect upon it. I think that after I was released. After I was released. In the prison, it did not happen that colleagues, who were in a real partisan combat, like on this photo in here [he points at a picture of a partisan group] […] no, it did not happen ever that I was said, that something immoral or so. It was fully accepted. Only as I said, then, during the investigation, but this was a snitch, you know. He did disturb my confidence.
>
> Me: About what?
>
> Leszek: About my premise, my belief that I did it well. But this was a snitch, you see.
>
> Me: But you did not know it at that time…
>
> Leszek: Oh no! Not at all. Ania, I only learned it in 2000! [Said as if it was unbelievable] Well, I, simply, I did not suspect, I was rather surprised by that reaction. I was amazed by his reaction concerning me. I, after all, knew very well that the Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (NSZ) did not handle either Germans or Russians with kid gloves, since they were in danger themselves.
>
> Me: But he somehow caused doubts…
>
> Leszek: Yes, doubts which were very negative, in terms of their influence on the investigation.

In the fragment above, Leszek recalls a long-term relationship with a co-prisoner, whom he admired for his political involvement. As it turned out recently, the anti-communist colonel was an informant cooperating with the state security forces to discover the truth about Leszek. Their long conversations in the cell made Leszek doubt the righteousness of his actions. They strengthened in him an image of himself as irrational and his past actions as having nothing to do with a serious political engagement. Reading the security files has helped

him to depart from this framework and to view the colonel as a traitor, who aimed at breaking him[94].

> Leszek: Just one more thing that, for about 15 or 20 years after my release, well… I had those… a nyhow, it is normal after all, dreams… I have a weapon, I hide it and the secret political police finds it and I go to jail again. […]They are of a sort that, I know, for the whole day long, not that I felt a great fear, but I did feel it somehow, you know. And these are very realistic dreams, so that I felt every exact detail of it […]. And the plot goes concretely, in a slow way […]. I am sleeping, in here I am sleeping. I am waking up, it is gloomy, well it is getting clearer and I see two people on the balcony and I am saying: Hey, gentlemen, how did you get in here? Do you want to steal something from me? It turns out that they are muggers. And you know, I constantly feel the tip of the gun on me, I see, I am talking to them and I am helpless, you know, and this helplessness, that I am helpless here, I cannot do anything, I cannot yell, and they begin to turn things over, they are looking for money. I indeed have 1000 zlotych in here [laughing – he refers to a real situation]. Ania, will they find or will they not find? But I am seeing these yobs, the sort of criminal yobs that I could only have seen in the prison… […] and when I woke up I felt as if these two men were in here. […] well, a man has a sort of injury and it will stay, there is no way out…
>
> Me: It is also normal to have these sorts of dreams…
>
> Leszek: But you see, the weapon and… [he smacks] I am saying, it is just a dream and damn it! I am not dreaming, I do have weapon hidden in here. Damn it the bloody UB [the secret police] you know…

Among other ways, Leszek's distress manifests itself in dreams. His feelings of uncertainty about his past deeds have been evoked by the processes of reformulation of his interpretative scripts. Clearly, the murder of the guard, the investigations, the imprisonment and the life lived with the stigma of being called a bandit generated many negative scripts about the self. Reworking these scripts at

94 Leszek's words, indicating that the reactions of the co-prisoner had had negative effects in the investigation, may refer to those moments in which Leszek snapped. Files stored in the IPN cellars contain two letters written by Leszek in which he ascribes major blame for his actions to his female teacher, who was eventually sentenced to prison for a couple of years. He further expressed his regret for hurting the Great Socialist Poland. Eventually though, he learned that he had actually been betrayed by a person who represented the myth most precious to him. The NSZ officer, as one of the researchers looking into Leszek's files in the IPN informed him (by bringing him copies of denunciation letters), was a snitch. The secret police's methods of breaking people for the purposes of investigation continue to produce consequences in terms of psychological states, even after so many years. It is perhaps the disclosure of these materials, still semi-secret and fragmentary, that played an important role, as they provoked the unfolding of difficult emotions and redefined subjectivities in new discursive patterns.

the age of seventy has been coupled with a strong emotional distress, and it has also implied the reliving of the sense of guilt and activation of old negative scripts. Eventually, it has also provoked a more reflexive attempt to justify the new positive scripts. Last year, Leszek felt proud when an invitation from the presidential palace reached him. At the same time, however, he feared attending such a high-ranking official celebration. His doubts made his legs go cold and he was unable to move the night before. His dreams made him tired and nervous. His desire to resolve his sense of guilt and his dream of belonging made him go. After the event, he interpreted his fears as a legacy of the repression he underwent.

The authorship

It is because of its haziness that Leszek's case fascinates me. It speaks about political action involving killing, the legitimacy of which swings back and forth depending on the social situation and historical context. It raises questions about the circumstances under which political violence or killing is justifiable and effective in the sense that it leaves no traces in people's psyche in terms of pangs of conscience and uncertainty about the correctness of one's deeds[95].

Uncannily, details of the investigation and trial recovered in the new authoritative form of the IPN served as the strongest *post factum* legitimacy possible for reworking Leszek's self-schemata. The communist state agents sought to use Leszek's case for the purposes of propaganda, so they dealt with it in a chillingly serious manner, sentencing Leszek and his childish fantasies to death. This sentence produced the ambiguity of Leszek's changing condition. On the one hand, it made people treat him with prejudice and distance in the past. On the other hand, it was his actual encounter with the gloomy communist apparatus of repression marked by bureaucratic traces that has granted him esteem and recognition in the present. Eliciting extreme responses to his actions, Leszek had to deal with the discrepant interpretative frameworks applied to his behaviour. The complexity of his historical condition generated emotional unrest in Leszek.

95 It would be interesting to systematically compare people such as Leszek - who belonged to the youth conspiracy - and the actual AK soldiers. While interviewing the AK soldiers, I saw no moments of hesitation or doubts about the purposefulness of committing political violence. I believe that their lack of doubts was caused by the fact that the social conditions for their actions were different too. They had a large organizational structure behind them and they were not in a position of giving orders, instead, they were carrying them out with high frequency. They also fought in a clear war situation (doubts often came to those who fought in the aftermath of WWII).

Leszek felt surprised by the depth of this project and my insistence on going into as many details of his life as possible and spending very long hours together. He seemed very honest in his almost confessional style of talking. It remained unsaid, however, what he expected from my work. It was more apparent that he was keen on me being his companion and listener. During these hours of talking, it was his honesty that struck me. I believe he remained honest because he needed to be, because the emerging representations of his political life remained so compressed and incapable of containing his ambivalent emotions and thoughts. On the other hand, however, I sense that he only wanted to express and narrate his life, thoughts and anxieties. I believe he would not have wanted all of his words to be interpreted and set forward with an emphasis being placed on the least *significant*. My attempts to explain that the core of my interest lay in the under-represented sphere of his life and thoughts always failed. I sense that, unlike the large majority of the people in the Association who, on Christmas Eve, wished me to *finally write the truth*, which meant revealing their suffering and heroism and the immorality of the communist system, he knew that I would depart from this wish. His silent agreement did not mean, however, that my making sense of his past would not actually irritate him. He never actually wanted to know what I thought. He never made an effort to listen to me, to get to know me. I hold respect not for his *heroic oppositional activity* but for the sincerity and openness with which he approached me, despite being conscious of becoming naked in front of my eyes – stripped of the glory that has given meaning to his whole life at the age of seventy. In a sense, I would want him never to read this piece. Equally strongly, though, I believe that my version sheds new light on an issue larger than Leszek's life, and it should be given a voice. I owe this voice to Leszek nonetheless.

Chapter Six
Between Acknowledgement and Erasure: social dynamics behind the production of political identities materialized in the public space

> And I am sure that, as all pendulums reverse their swing, so eventually will the swollen cities rupture like dehiscent wombs and disperse their children back to the countryside.
>
> From *Travels with Charley* by John Steinbeck

> There is […] hardly a square in Europe whose secret structure was not profaned and impaired over the course of the nineteenth century by an introduction of a monument.
>
> From *Moscow Diary* by Walter Benjamin

Inflation and erasure of memory

In Marianowice, the *inflation of memory*[96] (Huyssen 1996) is visible in the growing amount of commemorative forms. As argued by Frances Pine, Deema Kaneff and Haldis Haukanes (2004), the revival of monumentalization is an expression of those voices violated during communism and currently engaged in the process of complex reintegration into a symbolic public space. Memorials, as suggested by James Young (1993), concretize particular historical interpretations. Yet, the tendency for an increase in commemorative forms is coupled with equally complex processes of erasure, which also concretize particular historical interpretations. As Michael Rowlands and Chris Tilley (2006) noted, 'widespread destruction of a previously unwanted past is particularly a feature of postsocialist states in Eastern Europe and Russia'[97] (504). What Rowlands and

96 Compare M. Lambek's notion of defrosting of memory used in reference to European revival of remembrance of WW2, which is coupled with the transition to second-hand memory (Lambek 2005).

97 V. Sereda, working on the memory landscape of Lviv and Donetsk, proposes a different view on the attitudes towards the communist commemorative forms in the region. She talks about replacement, overlapping and hybridization (Conference paper on the conference *The socialist past today* organized in 2008 by Newcastle University).

Tilley call 'disgraced monuments' (2006) constitute remnants of earlier memory projects, which are often wrecked in order to grant invisibility to the adverse versions of the past, commemorated anew, and to underline a deliberated sense of discontinuity. This chapter aims at capturing, anthropologically, a historical moment characterized by the *inflation of memory* and its accompanying *processes of erasure*.

For this chapter, I undertook the fieldwork in a local council, recording opinions about commemorative projects. I conducted visual and archival research into past and existent commemorative forms, and participated in numerous unveilings of monuments. I also followed up stories of 'disgraced monuments' that I came across while talking to the former security officers and collected voices concerned about their erasure.

Inflation of memory

A move towards big monuments

With the collapse of communism and a change in the political climate, the state channels gradually opened up for the inclusion of the anti-communist heroes/victims into the memory project. At first, small groups of heroes/victims gathered around places that were significant for them; typically, these were the graves of their colleagues, in front of which they expressed their grief, anguish and respect. The Associations formed in connection with places of torture helped the heroes/victims realize that they were numerous enough to be able to imprint on the landscape visible representations of their heroism and suffering. Eventually, when the post-*Solidarity* elites came to power, an institutionalized demand was placed on the symbolic recognition of the heroes/victims and appropriation of their story by a politicized national narrative. The conservative politicians and heroes/victims formed a memory alliance that tied them together through bonds of loyalty and obligation.

One of the biggest monuments in Marianowice commemorating the heroes/victims was unveiled in October 2003 in front of the Tower, which used to be a prison and a place of torture. Foundation 'We Remember' [*Pamiętamy*][98], responsible for initiating the placing of monuments of the greatest underground commanders throughout Poland, had contacted Waldemar - a former underground soldier - jointly with a local politician now belonging to the Law and

98 The Foundation was established in the 1990s. It propagates and documents knowledge about the history of the Polish struggle for independence. The official website of the foundation is: http://lotowor.webpark.pl/fundacja.html .

Justice Party. They sowed in him a dream of creating a life-size monument, clearly visible in Marianowice's landscape, in memory of his commander and colleagues from the underground army, including two of his brothers. Until then, his lack of resources would have restricted him to fixing a wooden cross in a forest or placing a metal plaque in a church. The new possibilities inspired him to walk the city for days, searching for a suitable location for the memorial. He thought that the most symbolically significant site was the one previously occupied by a huge Bierut statue, the removal of which had produced a political rupture, offering nothing in its place. An empty square on the outskirts of the old town could accommodate a monumental design and, through sequential appropriation of the landscape, the victory of the anti-communist heroes would be underlined with a sublime subtext. Alas, walking around, Waldemar noticed a plate bearing the newly-designated name of the square. It was a Jewish name. Hence, with a sentiment of embitterment, Waldemar turned his eyes to the Tower and suggested that the memorial be located in its proximity.

A few years after the unveiling, a local politician, who was running for a post in the local elections under the Law and Justice flag, called Waldemar, asking for a favour. In a leaflet addressing the local electorate, the politician announced: 'I actively participated in numerous initiatives in the Marianowice area, among others, supporting and helping the veterans and soldiers of the underground. I am proud to underline that I was an initiator of the unveiling of a monument of Commander Sowa in front of the Tower'. The last page of the leaflet quotes Waldemar (a symbolic resource), who confirms this engagement.

This politician exemplifies what heroes/victims call 'our man' (*nasz człowiek*). 'Our man' is most often a politician who supports the idea of the memory project in which the heroes/victims and their past struggle are given honours. Such a person recognizes which political agents of the past represented the correct attitude. The reciprocal recognition practices index the alliance and network of loyalties and support gradually built up between anti-communist heroes/victims and local conservative politicians. This network of loyalties facilitated changes in the commemorative landscape of Marianowice. For the shape of the commemorative landscape of the city, it was particularly important that 'our men' filled one body - the Council for the Protection of Memory of Combat and Martyrdom (*Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa*), which manages the commemorative landscape of the voivodeship.

Let's call a spade a spade

The Council is responsible for the 'initiation and coordination of the activities concerned with the commemoration of the historical events, places, and figures belonging to the history of the struggle and suffering of the Polish Nation, both in Poland and abroad', as well as places of combat and suffering of other nations on the territory of the Republic of Poland (*The Act on Constitution of the Council for Protection of Memory of Fights and Martyrdom…* 1988). The membership of this body remains dependent on politically sensitive appointments. Locally, the Councils include the voivode and its proxy, as well as chosen representatives of authorities (including military, police and firefighters), the IPN employees, and members of social organizations such as combatant circles, museums, associations of victims and the like. Hence, some of the heroes/victims also hold membership of the Council. The Council gathers periodically to discuss the commemorative calendar of the region, to give formal 'advice' on projects of commemorative forms, and to deliberate over those who deserve personal forms of recognition, such as medals. The membership of the Council has been gradually changing and this change could be described as a long process of pushing out the communist heroes and their supporters and replacing them with the anti-communist heroes/victims and those who want to commemorate them.

The Council's meetings constitute important moments of recognition and acknowledgement for Marianowice's heroes/victims. Those who were selected to represent their circles in the assembly, by their sheer presence in the gatherings, feel they have an influence over the shape of the memory project. Clearly, the participants on the Council are conscious of their stakes and their mission to give 'proper' names to historical processes. The past struggle had shifted into a symbolic space of commemoration perceived by the heroes/victims as the sphere in which the anti-communist truth could be rescued from oblivion and propagated. The local state officials invite for cooperation those they call the 'proper' members of the Council (*właściwi ludzie*), giving expression to their ideological and political alignments.

According to law, a proposal for a new commemoration or renovation of an old one must be presented to the Council for examination. During the assembly, its participants orient their actions towards 'naming' the past and determining the societal acts of remembrance through the affective demands for a clear demarcation of guilt and the freezing of the moral judgements in the discussed monumental forms. The meetings constitute an open-ended process of (re)articulation of the past. An example from one of the Council's meetings

should give a sense of the open-endedness and dynamism of memory politics, as well as the conflicting and moral character of performed evaluations[99].

Authorities in one of Marianowice's districts sent to the Council a proposal to renovate a monument erected in memory of the inhabitants of one village who died, or were murdered, between 1939 and 1945 by the Hitlerites (*hitlerowcy*). The monument was unveiled by 'the local authorities and the society' in 1986 on the anniversary of a policing operation performed in the village. A nervous voice could be heard at some point in the discussion: 'My beloved ones, but who did pacify[100]!?' 'Germans! Germans!' – someone replied. 'It is written there' – another voice came in support. A former proxy took the stage, protesting about the use of the word *hitlerowcy*: 'Not *hitlerowcy* but Germans!' 'Let's call a spade a spade' – someone else uttered. A hero/victim sitting next to me admitted that it was a valid remark because *hitlerowcy* was a term coined in the 60s – meaning it was made up for propaganda purposes. Another hero/victim sitting next to me whispered sadly: 'In those years, many such monuments were unveiled, so that you did not know whom they meant!' – referring to memory politics led by the communist regime in which Nazi violence was juxtaposed with Soviet friendship and liberation, silencing atrocities committed by the communists. Another hero/victim sitting at the back uttered decisively: 'Some things require changes, it is obvious! It will soon appear that it was us who murdered them' – the ghosts of past allegations and still-unexplained murders surfaced, mobilizing the heroes/victims to stand up for their secure position[101]. Gradually, it became clear that some of those around the table thought that, in that region in those years, it was not only the *hitlerowcy* but also the Soviets (*Sowieci*) who may have pacified, and that it was reasonable to claim that both aggressors should be blamed for the deaths imprinted on this specific inscription. The IPN historian intervened, proposing a solution: 'We can establish the names and the cause'. Another hero/victim sitting at the back (one of the very few with a communist background who was still participating in the meetings) protested against changing original inscriptions: 'They should have it the way they wanted'. The

99 An interesting study in conflicting memories of one historical event in Poland is D. Morgan's ‚Konflikt Pamięci. Narracje Radomskiego Czerwca 1976' (2004).

100 Pacification (pacyfikacja) is a word used to signify the usage of a military force to suppress resistance. In Polish, it is most often used in reference to the German actions performed against the Polish population.

101 The anti-communist agents did commit many violent acts during WWII and the early years of communism. Some of the partisan groups are alleged to have committed crimes against the civilian population. Particularly controversial are the partisan actions taken against the Ukrainian civilian population that inhabited the Eastern borderlands of Poland.

proxy, taking the position of negotiator, explained that they would only make a suggestion and that the district authorities would decide on their own. Still, since this monument commemorated an anonymous group of people, he suggested, it was a good idea for the IPN to help to make their names known. With this conclusion, the issue was closed.

Attention given to commemorative engagements reveals how the history of communism is still in the making, far from reaching a clear-cut narrative defining the aims and consequences of the series of violent political confrontations. It further shows the heroes/victims' desire to secure their version of memory, thus revealing their sense of uncertainty and vulnerability. The ending of communism in Poland occurred in conditions resembling those in which the Americans attempted to deal with the Vietnam War (Sturken 1991). Its distinctive features comprise divisions and ambiguities that have recently been translated into the myth of success and unity – a myth of a democratic Poland emergent from the ashes of WWII and communism. The value placed by the heroes/victims on naming the transgressors is rooted in their feelings of being violated just as much as it has to do with their sense that a clear definition of the past is relevant for future generations, in order to help them orient themselves in the stream of historical events. This version needs to be imprinted on the landscape in order for it to endure. Commemorative projects approved by the Council are turned into commemorative forms around which commemorative practices take place. I shall now describe an example of a monument to the last partisan and the practices of commemoration that took place in front of it. Like all other monuments, this commemorative form had to gain the approval of the Council.

Monumentalizing the Hero/Victim

Dead bodies have a long and widespread history of being politically used, especially in moments of societal transformations (see: Robben 1996; Rév 2005; Verdery 1999). They were also turned into a resource on the Polish path to democracy.

In the summer of 2006, I attended an unveiling of a monument to an underground soldier near Marianowice. The monument was part of the larger project led by the Foundation 'We Remember', which initiated the commemoration of the main anti-communist partisan commanders who had led their troops in a hopeless fight against the Soviets and communists throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and up to the 1960s. The Foundation has realized the potential of the dead bodies of partisans for the production of a national iconography by compressing complex life stories into symbolic carriers of political meanings. The project

gained much support from the Law and Justice Party's government and the heroes/victims. Each unveiling was turned into a patriotic event of national significance. A few of these monuments were unveiled in Poland in the 2000s, sometimes provoking controversy[102].

During my fieldwork, I participated in two rituals of unveiling of partisans' monuments initiated by the Foundation *Pamiętamy* in different parts of Poland. These rituals were preceded by a Catholic mass, followed by an official unveiling ceremony in the town centres. On both occasions, cooperation with the local authorities was a decisive factor, and the importance of the state agents was accredited by their spatial situatedness, direct evocations of gratitude and acknowledgement, guaranteed space for their speech acts and their central role in the actual acts of unveiling. Looking at the crowd gathered on both occasions brought an association with Winter's description of the post-war commemorative rituals in which a 'mixed cast of characters' was engaged, namely public officials and those who attended for personal reasons (1995:86). In the Polish context, the organizational effort was additionally supported by Church officials and by people working for non-profit foundations and institutions dealing with various aspects of 'memory' and its production (foundations, museums, research institutes etc.). A large group of journalists was also present on those occasions. The heroes/victims came to these events in buses rented by the local authorities and in private cars, dressed for the occasion, carrying standards and tiny cameras.

I will focus now on the unveiling of a monument to a figure called, by both the heroes/victims and the security officers, *the last partisan*. This man hid underground until the late 60s when he was shot by a security officer. He became a legend impeded with divergent meanings, evoking disparate feelings. In this analysis, I will focus on those performing the commemorative ceremony, and those who joined the spectacle just to observe, out of Sunday boredom, as well as on one security officer, who was thinking affectively about the event that day. By focusing on these actors and their orientation towards the commemorative practices taking place around the monument to the last partisan, I wish to present the contested and conflicting aspect of the inflating memory forms.

102 The biggest controversy surrounded the unveiling of a monument to a partisan commander from the Highlands, whose episodes of cooperation with the apparatus of repression as well as his violent actions are said to be well-documented.

Poland continued and discontinued

A number of Marianowice state officials spoke at the cemetery after the son of the partisan and the Marshal of the Voivodeship had placed an urn containing his ashes behind the monument. These speech acts were very similar in content and structure to other speech acts uttered on such occasions. Treating them as a genre, I will call them *anti-communist commemorative addresses*. In such speech acts, the anti-communist partisan is treated as a symbol of the entire anti-communist struggle. The repressive apparatus and its methods, on the other hand, are used as a referent signifying the entirety of communism and its malevolence. Such a pair of synecdoches is a common linguistic trope revealing a social imagination characteristic of the memory alliance in question. These tropes effectively compress time and the complexities of the social world in order to build necessary continuities between past, present and future. These continuities justify the common effort and give direction to the newly-situated struggle. Such speech acts are also characterized by a display of competence in recent history presented by the evocation of numerous names of places of torture and oppression, during which no differentiation is made between crimes committed by the Polish agents of communism of different eras and those perpetrated by the Soviet actors. Reaching for the recent historiography legitimates one's words. Specific dates, names and other details build up a dramaturgy and give a sense of the *real*. The speeches break the long-lasting silence about the crimes committed during communism and acknowledge the heroes/victims. Such evocations index 'the knowledge' and 'remembrance' performed by the younger generations of politicians, who take upon themselves a duty to 'pay the debts' to those who 'gave their lives and who spilled their blood' for this country, providing them at the same time with a sense of security, as the memory of their deeds now seems protected. The very partisan whose monument was being unveiled was at the same time treated as the representative of every anti-communist partisan (in particular, he is synonymous with those partisans who served under his command). Yet, this very partisan and his anti-communist actions were further indicative of 'the objection of the entire Polish society against this political and social system introduced through coercion' by the Soviet occupation. A synecdoche chain builds up an illusion of togetherness and common orientation to an aim. It helps to paint a picture of the communist Poland as colonised, a Poland in which everyone lived with secret anti-communist thoughts, in which a few were on the wrong side. The partisan, who hid for over a dozen years under an existing communist state form, spending many years in a tiny bunker dug out of the ground in a peasant yard, is imagined as the one who 'never agreed with the communist system' to the extent that he preferred to live literally underground.

As Poland during communism is imagined as a step back into the forests, secretively breathing under mother earth, waiting for liberation, those partisans who resisted in these places are turned into the ultimate symbol of this country, its genuine suffering and heroism.

Dramaturgy of kinship

Close kin participate in the unveilings of the monuments commemorating the anti-communist partisans. Their sheer presence proves the 'real' aspect of the past repression and suffering, pushing the official part of the ritual towards the highly personal 'dramaturgical modes of representation' (White 2004). Their presence and evocations mark the continuous suffering, a long-lasting effect of the past policies of the violent regime, underlying the interruption of the very intimate universe of kinship, which should, it is believed, exist securely. Like authentic historical artefacts, the bereaved family's presence gives a sense of immediacy, 'naturalizing particular versions of the past' (Young 1993:127). As people respond more directly to objects than to text (Young 1993:132), they also react more immediately to a bereaved family's company than to the *anti-communist commemorative addresses*, which slowly turn into a convention.

During the unveiling of *the last partisan*, his son was sitting on a white plastic chair in front of the prominent politicians, Church agents and veterans. Dressed in a suit and tie, he sat there seemingly in a reflective mood, waiting for his turn to speak. When all the other speeches had been delivered, he took his turn, speaking in an emotional voice:

> I am the son of the last partisan. I do not remember my father. He died when I was ten. I only remember hands sticking out from the cereals and a disappearing in the forest figure. I – the son of the bandit, of a partisan – I lived through numerous humiliations and stress. When I was growing up and my mother and my father's family were telling me about the father buried in a nameless grave at night by his murderers, decapitated… as a child, I did not understand it. But now, I know that my father's murderers fell into ruins of humiliation, while he comes back; he comes back as the one who… [he cries] as… a symbol of endurance in an enslaved Poland.

Such re-evocations of descriptive pictures invite imagination, which both produces empathy and takes us back to the cultural representation of an ideal family in which the father should be with his son and wife. Again, the fact of his absence and the deterioration of family bonds are unambiguously associated with the acts of members of the repressive regime, who killed the man, as well as with his conscious sacrifice for the wellbeing of the larger community. During this speech, whispers could be heard: 'this is his son' – uttered somewhere in the backstage of the ritual. After the unveiling, the heroes/victims, returning to their

daily lives, told their fellows in the Association who did not attend the events: 'and his son was there, he hardly remembers his father', 'he was so little when his father was murdered'. Such stories embodied by real people become signifiers and reminders of the communist past. Some traces of it (communist versions) must be erased others, such as this story, need to circulate and remind.

The ritual in the service of making the transformation happen

Unveilings of monuments are social rituals of remembrance. Nicholas Dirks (1994), similarly to Jean Comaroff (1985), looks at rituals' potential as a medium through which 'the values and structures of a contradictory world may be addressed and manipulated', interpreting rituals as both 'expressive and pragmatic, for they aim to change the real world by inducing transformations in the world of symbol and rite' (Comaroff 1985:196 cited in Dirks 1994:487). Such a vision of social rites moves away from Durkheimian and functionalist-structuralist interpretations towards a more dynamic, always re-emerging vision of ritual conditioned by power relations. Dirk argued that, as rituals serve as critical moments of definition for collectivities, these moments should be perceived not as final - an expression of a stable structure - but as provisional, always potent with possibilities of conflict emerging from politics of representation and misrepresentation. In his interpretation, the ritual is about display and achievement of power - power understood as an endless series of relations characterized by struggle and alignments (Dirks 1994).

Dirk's view of ritual is particularly fruitful for the analysis of rituals taking place in the periods of transformation. The commemorative ritual organized at the unveiling of the partisan monument, by a joint effort of the Marianowice authorities, the Church, and the heroes/victims, aimed at transforming the national community, its self-understanding and self-representation. The unveiling happened before a relatively narrow circle of people to whom the voivodeship proxy sent invitations, or who happened to find out about it through other 'memory networks'. The names and addresses written by his secretaries on the envelopes added up to a scaffolding of a local memory alliance, bringing together people who share a common imagery of historical and symbolic representation of communism and its significance for the present. Such rituals do not simply commemorate heroes/victims. In the light of the dismantling of the communist power structures, they are minute steps in the constitution of a new authority reliant on specific alliances. The engagement of actors in the memory project is dictated by their consciousness of the precariousness of the state of 'being in power', which allows the realization of their vision of national com-

munity emergent from the past as much as it is dictated by the experience of long years of subjugation and suffering.

For many people, who do not belong to the narrow circle tightly packed at the local cemetery where the unveiling took place, the version of history evoked during the unveiling feels like a 'misrepresentation' or simply a 'representation'. In this sense, the performative acts and their material remnants are pregnant with conflicts over meaning.

From an indigenous point of view

The unveiling of the monument to the last partisan took place in a small town located in the Marianowice region. Since the church in which the celebrations commenced was remote from the cemetery where the monument was located, time was allocated in the schedule for the ritual participants to solemnly cover the distance. Because the church seemed to be filled with faces I knew belonged elsewhere - mostly to the city of Marianowice - I took the opportunity to walk through the town and see what its inhabitants were preoccupying themselves with. As I was taking a photo of a street, a man in his forties came out of his house and stopped in front of my camera, smiling and posing for a photograph. Naturally, we started to talk about 'the event', to which his first reaction was 'let me show you something'. Leading me to an empty space in the square, he pointed towards a building that 'used to be a bank' during communist times. 'This bank was robbed by the partisan whose monument is just about to be unveiled', he explained. During this robbery, a few militia men were killed and the empty spot in the square to which he was now pointing used to contain a monument devoted to those who had lost their lives 'on duty' in the name of the 'people's authority'.

The square in which we stood was located opposite the cemetery. The two were divided by a two-lane street. As we looked towards the other side of the street, where a few men in suits and uniforms were impatiently taking up their positions, my new acquaintance stated, 'I do not know how long this monument will last'. Some minutes later, he told the story of a recently unveiled 'monument of Jews' consecrated by the Marianowice archbishop[103] a few years ago,

101 The Marianowice archbishop at that time was considered by the heroes/victims to be a 'liberal'. The term is being used pejoratively and it derives from the archbishop's ecumenical teachings. In terms of his stand on the question of memory politics, this translated into acts of inclusion of Jews into the commemorative landscape of Marianowice, as well as an objection to lustration laws – particularly those pointed at the verification of the Catholic Church's past. Some time after I finished the research, the mass media

which had been demolished not long ago. I looked around just in time to realize that the part of the town in which the unveiling was to take place had been strangely appropriated by variously marked bodies. This situatedness implied a division along the lines of inclusion and exclusion. The local population gathered on one side of the street, while the direct participants in the commemorative ritual assembled on the other side.

As uniformed police officers gradually took over the street by diverting the traffic away from the memory politics towards the town's smaller streets, the heroes/victims in military clothing, official authorities in suits, the clergy in cassocks, and other people dressed 'for the occasion', all of whom had gathered to commemorate the great partisan, slowly formed a column in front of the church, ready to walk towards the cemetery. The locals, on the other hand, congregated at the edge of the main square situated opposite the cemetery. Grouped in threes or fours, emerging like phantoms from within the square, the locals stared at the cemetery, occasionally commenting on the progress of the event. Whenever I approached someone, the commentaries halted. When I sat next to two men in their seventies and asked why they were sitting on this side of the street, one of them swiftly replied, laughing, 'because we are unwanted guests, we have to observe from the far side' [*a my tu nieproszone goście, my z daleka my tu musim obserwować*]. When I asked them about the partisan and their attitude to his monumentalization, one of them said, 'What do I care? He neither helped me nor did he harm me. What does it disturb me?' [*A co mnie tam. Ani mi nie pomógł, ani mi zaszkodził. Co mi to przeszkadza?*] I stood up and moved a little further, taking photographs and looking for some more interlocutors. An old man sitting on a bench replied 'yes' to my question 'Did you know him [the partisan]?'. When I asked him what he had been like [the partisan], he answered 'How was he? He was good. He was good to me. He did not beat me, so, what… And how do you say?' [*A dobry był… dla mnie, nie bił mnie, to co… A co Pani powie*?]. I said that I had not been there and therefore did not know him, playing the question back: 'What is being said about him around here?'. The man stated: 'Oh, different things, one says this, one says that' [*A różnie gadają. Jeden tak, drugi tak.*] I wanted to know whether he remembered the monument that was no longer there and, as he confirmed this, I asked whose monument it was. He evoked a typical Polish family name - Wójcik - as though it were clear who Wójcik was. When I asked him 'who was Wojcik?', he said 'He was a communist' - a name that sounded different from 'those who were killed on duty', words uttered by the self-proclaimed local expert on history some minutes ago.

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announced that the archbishop himself had cooperated with the state security apparatus. The archbishop denied this, claiming there had been no evidence for such an accusation.

Approaching the cemetery, a military orchestra punctuated my short conversations with a sound of authority announcing the actual beginning of the second stage of the commemorative ritual. I started to move towards the other side of the street, leaving behind those whose everyday lives were filled with versions of that particular life story, which sounded different from the textbook's and the heroes/victims' accounts. Variously aligned voices - 'he beat me', 'he did not beat me', 'what do I care' - were now occupying one space of the town, clearly peripheral to the central politics of the new state, which had brought the monument into it. For them, memory politics was an easily graspable term. They had gathered there to watch a political spectacle. Experiencing the changing memory landscape did not evoke any emotion in them. It rather reminded them of the arbitrariness of the political craft to which they felt subjected if not subjugated. This spectacle gave them an occasion to complain about the great sums of money being wasted on such events, while they represented themselves as people being continuously forced to tighten their belts. In the commentaries of these people, the national memory project conflicted with the everyday wellbeing of the nation.

Recollections of the security officer

One person for whom this unveiling was particularly important did not participate in it. This was Janek, a former security officer orphaned at the age of three in the 1940s. His father, a local communist functionary, was shot in his house in a village close to the one in which the unveiling was now taking place. According to Janek's story, he was shot in front of his wife and son (Janek's eyes covered by his mother) by the partisan, the celebration of whose monument I am describing here. During one of our phone conversations, which took place some weeks before the unveiling, he mentioned to me that such a ceremony was to take place, and that we should attend it together. This idea was a cause of concern for me, as it was difficult to imagine how I could actually be there with the security officer at a celebration in which the heroes/victims with whom I had chosen to work were taking part. In fact, he was unable to attend the ceremony, as he was busy with a court case in which he was accused of a 'communist crime'. When I met him a day earlier, he told me he had had a dream in which he set fire to this monument. He rephrased swiftly, 'I would set fire to this monument'.

Janek was agitated by the event and he kept returning to it during our meetings. In one of the conversations we had together with another security officer, he recalled the last partisan and the unveiling. The other security officer knew

about Janek's life story. In response, he expressed his regret at not obtaining the files on Janek's father from the main security archive, suggesting that these would have provided proof of the last partisan's responsibility for the cruel murder of his father. Janek, however, had his own special proof, which he had shown me during one of our previous meetings. It was a tiny booklet - his mother's ID - proving her membership of a peasants' collective. Evoking touching memories of his mother, whose life had been broken, but who nonetheless did all she could for Janek, this proof was particularly effective. Randomly, in the page margins, notes of dates and initials had been made in pencil. According to Janek, these were his mother's hand-written notes documenting the visits of the last partisan to their house after the murder of his father. 'For the money he was coming. She had so little'.

In contrast to the son of the last partisan or to the heroes/victims, Janek had no officially approved documents to cling to while imagining his family's past. There was no big narrative in which to nest his pieces of information. There was the communist narrative condemning the partisans as enemies of the state. However, this lost its authority with the collapse of the regime. Janek tried to make his memories exist in the new framework of the IPN and the democratic state form, asking the IPN employees to give him access to his father's files. To his annoyance though, he is still waiting. Unable to situate his processes of remembrance in an authoritative register, Janek was restricted to cultivating them in a kinship context. The kinship register seems effective when it comes to processes of memory formation, as it is capable of evoking strong emotions, which feed memories. In the Polish cultural model of kinship, ties that link family members, due to their cultural loading and immediacy, produce an abundance of affects. These emotions are based on expectations and values differently associated with the behaviours of family members, adding up to ambivalent sentiments of which the most disturbing is a sense of guilt or regret, often surfacing upon the death of a close relative (Witeska 2003). Such sentiments grant the processes of remembrance their persistence, even in the condition of the lack of a grand narrative into which particular recollections might be fitted. They motivate the younger generations to fabricate out of available resources what Marianne Hirsch calls *postmemory*.

> Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that proceeded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor re-created (Hirsch 1996:659).

Hirsch coined the term *postmemory* in reference to creative acts by young Jewish artists unsettled by their parents' and grandparents' past. Deprived of direct access to that past, they clearly bred original forms of remembering relying on a narrative that came out of a generation with a common experience of being violated. Despite being a security officer and not an artist, Janek's processes of remembrance could be understood through the lens of the postmemory concept. His type of imaginative investment stemmed from his former profession of an investigative officer. His imagination works not towards the creation of artworks representing suffering, but towards linking tiny pieces of information to form a hypothesis, to imagine the motifs, the behaviours, the violent acts, and to make a coherent story out of them. The story of the murder of his father surfaced at that point of his life for a reason. Accused of a communist crime and undergoing a trial, Janek not only looked for the tools of defence, but also genuinely wanted a coherent explanation of himself. Furnished with limited resources for achieving coherence, he remained attached to the story of his childhood, turning it into a resource highly relevant for his self-narrative.

Allen Feldman argued that 'Formulaic and ideological depiction can leave vast realms of experience unnarrated and dehistorized […] making them inaccessible to a society as a cultural resource' (2004:61). Janek's story does not seem to hold a potential for becoming a cultural resource under the present condition of the memory project in Poland. He did not mention this story during the trial, leaving its power of defence for himself alone. He believed it used to be a resource when the state apparatus of repression offered him a position, claiming that his father's murder was the reason why he was recruited. Yet, now, the story sounded rather absurd. Throughout this fieldwork, such tiny, absurd stories helped me understand the illusory quality of grand narratives.

Erasure

Razed to the ground

The grand narrative created through the memory project in question is not only about constructing. The memory project implies erasing the communist forms of remembrance, understood as fake and improper. Apart from being a sign of a societal need for reconstruction, the process of erasure strengthens the stability of the new memory project, furnishing the new commemorative forms with a sense of indisputability. In Marianowice, in the first place, Bierut's monument and the Monument of the Soviet Soldiers were erected. Many communist commemorative forms, however, spread among the cemeteries and in the public spaces, as yet untouched by the crowds overthrowing the system, still wait to be

noticed and removed through bureaucratic channels. The bureaucratic management of the memory landscape in Marianowice depends on the local configurations of power and grass-roots initiatives.

Upon a visit to the voivodeship office, I was given a file called the 'state of memory', which included the commemorative inscriptions and monuments that had been unveiled in Marianowice since 1989. Asking for a list of the communist commemorative forms that had been erected, I was told, 'This is not recorded'. The official I talked to admitted that, by the time he had taken office, most of the communist sites of commemoration had been already 'razed to the ground' [*wykoszone*]. 'They were razed to the ground just after 1989 and no one recorded it'. He also mentioned, though, that there were some surviving remnants, mostly remote from Marianowice and his office. Since 2005, he had written letters to approximately forty municipalities, officially asking for the removal of the commemorative plaques honouring communist agents. Apparently, there was a correlation between the pace of erasure and the location of a commemorative form. The more centrally located the monument, the more probable its rapid disappearance.

'Graves are something quite different' said the proxy, when I told him about my walk through a local cemetery where a long row of graves, fitted into one neat line, seemingly uniform, displayed the internal contradictions of the commemorative landscape to a careful viewer. A couple of graves of the 'fixing agents of the people's authority' and security and militia officers, who were buried under grey tombstones without symbols, opened a row that was completed by a group of white crosses decorated with white and red flowers and national emblems – a row of graves marking the revived memory of anti-communist underground fighters. In the middle of the cemetery, a tall obelisk-like statue for the 'heroes of liberty', unveiled during communism, overshadowed a big cross recently devoted to the memory of the victims of the Katyń crime. The Pine Cemetery near Marianowice demarcates the historically difficult landscape in a similar spatial arrangement. There, a Russian tank'[104] surrounded by the graves of the unknown Soviet soldiers is clearly visible from the Katyń monument naming all the victims of the infamous mass murder inscribed under a large

104 In Marianowice, Russian 'liberators' are monumentalized in the form of a tank into which one can walk. During communist times, kindergarten and school trips would visit this place on All Saints Day, lighting candles and playing there. Then, with the transformation, the tank was abandoned. For a couple of years there were almost no candles lit in proximity to it, while the Katyń commemorative plaque was surrounded by hundreds of candles. When I visited Marianowice cemetery in 2005, the tank was illuminated again, and the number of candles left in its proximity and in front of the Katyń commemorative plaque became comparable.

metal cross. The anti-communist fighters also lie buried close by. All of these politically distinct and significant bodies are in turn surrounded by less significant singular graves of people with politically irrelevant names. 'When it comes to graves, a far-reaching delicacy ought to be applied', said the proxy. His secretary added, 'Everybody has the right to a burial'. 'However', the proxy continued, 'some of the graves should be deprived of the status of a war grave'. Such a status implies the obligation of the state to take care of a grave or a monument. In fact, those graves commemorating the 'fixing agents of the people's authority' were deprived of the state's protection and care last year. The proxy explained to me how this slower track of erasure would eventually happen: 'After a while, the graves that are not taken care of can be ploughed'. A Catholic rule of respect for the dead requires the process to look as if it were natural, the naturalness being achieved through abandonment. This process grows in opposition to intervention in the 'secular' spaces marking state authority, where the state agents acting in the name of democracy and historical justice interfere with and remove the 'shameful' acts of commemoration. As they remove the 'memory outdated in today's reality', they simultaneously unveil the new one.

The straightening of the history

One winter's afternoon, while interviewing a retired officer of the citizen militia, I heard a story about a memorial plaque that had been hung and then taken down, only to be hung and taken down again. He told the story with a sentiment of compassion for the people who wanted to hang the plaque and disappointment with the political condition of the local and state politics. After that interview, I met with Jerzy - a President of the Association of the Pensioners of the Ministry of Interior Affairs of the Republic of Poland in one of Marianowice's districts - who initiated the renovation of the plaque. Jerzy's account turned out to be very frugal. He narrated the story, constantly referring to a pile of papers he had gathered to document the whole 'scandal', repeating 'it is all written here, it is all written here!', pointing at the pile of copies of local mass media reports, official correspondence, and his own papers. He sat there with me in one room of his cold flat decorated with hunting trophies, very silent and empty, looking at me calmly and hardly ever speaking, at one point reaching for his heart pills, at a few points visibly moved, stifling his emotions and fixing his wet eyes on one point.

The renovated plaque was hung on the wall of the local police office in the summer of 2005 on the initiative of the Association of the Pensioners of the Ministry of Interior Affairs. It was unveiled with the approval of the local police office, voivodeship police headquarters and the Marianowice voivodeship of-

fice. The plaque was also sanctified by a priest assigned to the local garrison – his presence indexing an ambiguous return of 'the ex-functionaries of the communist state' to the Church after 1989. One of Jerzy's colleagues solemnly uttered the following words before the unveiling:

> Today's ceremony commemorates the history of this district. It is an expression of remembering the functionaries associated with a service for the Ministry of Interior Affairs, who, during the years of 1944-1947, fell in the tragic circumstances while on duty for our district[105]. It is a statement of a historical truth [*prawda historyczna*] concerning the post-war, complicated history of our nation. Memory and history are not interpretations of events and no one can say today whether this death was justified or not.

The expression 'functionaries associated with a service' and the usage of the official name of the ministry, which sounds the same today, are examples of a language of distantiation that ambiguates the ex-officers of militia and the secret services belonging to the repressive state form, thus distancing them from the ascription of guilt for its crimes. Their version of a commemorative event is more than a commemoration. It is a call for coherence. Through renovation of the plaque and the changes made to the inscription, the former functionaries aimed at bringing the communist past together with the democratic present in order to grant themselves continuity and unchangeable recognition. They expect to be respected. Their understanding of transformation and democracy does not include punishment, but a right to one's voice and version. The plaque, which hung on the wall of the local police office, was one material sign of the shift towards a blurred language of distantiation from communism adopted by the functionaries, who were searching for a safe place in the democratic Poland.

The plaque, 'renovated' on Jerzy's initiative, was hung for the first time on the same wall in 1959. At that time, it carried the following inscription:

> In memory of the fallen functionaries of the M.O. [civic militia] in the fights with the bandits [*bandy*][106] for the People's Poland [*Polska Ludowa*] […] for the fifteenth anniversary of the M.O. – the society.

The inscription on the new plaque had a different formula:

> To the fallen on duty between 1944-1947 functionaries of the Ministry of the Interior Affairs of Marianowice district - The Association of the Pensioners of the Ministry of Interior Affairs of the Marianowice District.

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105 The reading of the plaque demands historical knowledge. 'Communist functionaries' who died between 1944 and 1947 on duty were most probably involved in fights with local anti-communist partisans.

106 A 'name' commonly used by the communist functionaries for the anti-communist partisans to point out the criminal and illegal aspects of their deeds.

A slight but significant change in language indicates 'the ex-communist functionaries' hope that they could continue to be recognized in the new state form by 'straightening' the linguistic nuances. The change from the 'M.O.' to the 'Functionaries of the Ministry…' points towards the communist agents' insistence on the continuity of the Polish state form, which could grant them acknowledgement. The renovated plaque, officially approved, lasted until the beginning of 2006. In 2006, after the Law and Justice Party came to power in the autumn of 2005, the Marianowice Voivode Proxy for the Veterans' Affairs and Heritage wrote a letter to the Chief of the Voivodeship Police Office, politely asking for the removal of the plaque in question. The district authorities and the local heroes/victims took a firm position: 'The plaque must be removed', 'These were murderers'. A seemingly impartial passer-by, expressing indifference, gave his opinion to a local journalist: 'I do not think that these militia guys should be commemorated, but I got used to this plaque'. The proxy of the voivode stated authoritatively: 'I think the fate of this sort of plaque is determined', 'such plaques are falsifiers of history'. The voivode of Marianowice stated: 'Exposing in the independent Poland commemorations glorifying formations which served the communist regime, and which are negatively evaluated by history, depreciate the public image of the state sector'. Meanwhile, Jerzy lamented: 'I am surprised by the action of the Marianowice Voivodeship Office. The Militia officers fought for law and order [*ład i porządek*] in this country, doesn't this count? […]We will protest and we will write about it to wherever it is possible [*pisać w tej sprawie gdzie się da*]. Such straightening of history [*prostowanie historii*] has no sense'.

This strange formulation, 'strengthening of history', carries great depth of expression for the historical position of people such as Jerzy. They hold an intimate knowledge of the past violence, in which they were often personally involved. At the same time, the 'new version', which had never previously been evoked with such strength, left them with no space for the social understanding of their past and present positions, no space for defence, denying them the right to complex situatedness. During our meeting, Jerzy heaved a sigh and said: 'I lived through things in life. I have been delegated to Warsaw. […] I have never seen such hatred as today, REALLY! […] Nothing is done for the *wellbeing of the people'*. He talked about the kids who have no food and beg, about incommensurable crimes characterizing today's reality, a moral decay, and summed it up: 'things do not work here'. Then, he fixed his gaze on a photo of the plaque and recalled a group of children who, on their way from school, stopped to leave flowers and light a candle in front of it. It was as if this image served to legitimate its present existence, an image that most probably belonged to a faraway past, if not purely to Jerzy's imagination.

The Chief of the Marianowice Police informed Jerzy in an official letter with authoritative stamps that, despite the proper legal regulations, 'the commemorative plaques, which are out of date [*nieaktualne*] in today's reality', cannot be destroyed. Hence, the former plaque - outdated in today's reality - lies in the cellar of the district police office, while the second one is somewhere in Marianowice Police headquarters, and the space on wall is left empty. Yet, as it has not been repainted, the sign of absence signifies no illusion of 'common memory'.

When I asked the proxy how it was possible for the plaque to have been hung and unveiled, he explained that it happened because, at that time, a different voivode was in office. The proxy described the four-year term (2000-2004) of the previous voivode as a 'red terror'. The 'red terror' meant that a few people engaged in the 'correct' memory politics faced 'mortifications' (i.e. they were fired). The point was that 'the old voivode supported the security', said the proxy, immediately correcting his slip of the tongue[107] - 'the voivode supported the communist veteran circles and their commemorations'. Thus, with a new voivode, 'more representative' circles were invited to the Commission – here he named a few, articulating their names as if naming legendary heroes, mentioning among them some members of the Association with whom I worked. These people opted for the plaque to be removed.

The pace

The pace of inflation and erasure of the communist forms of commemoration in Marianowice has depended on the local power relations understood in terms of the ideological genealogy of the post-communists and the post-anti-communists. It has further depended on the centre-periphery model, with the city being inflated and purified much faster than the rural districts surrounding it. Only the cemeteries have turned into spaces of refuge for the 'outdated' inscriptions and monuments. Commemorative acts and acts of erasure constitute the historically specific forms that political action has taken in both communist and post-communist Poland. A pendulum swings, reversing the locations of specific heroes/victims and perpetrators. The chapters to follow provide a closer look at the position of the communist perpetrators in the new polity.

107 It is obvious that representatives of the secret services would not sit on such bodies; nonetheless, it is very common for other people to be placed under such a commonsense label, which gradually starts to encapsulate the definite meaning of communism.

Chapter Seven
The Factory of Pathologies: collectivized imageries about the former security officers under the democratic state

> The results, as I observed them in the laboratory, are disturbing. They raised the possibility that human nature cannot be counted on to insulate men from brutality and inhumane treatment under the direction of malevolent authority. A substantial proportion of people do what they are told to do irrespective of the content of the act, and without limitations of conscience, as long, as they perceive that the command comes from a legitimate authority. If in this study, an anonymous experimenter could successfully command adults to subdue a fifty year old man, and force on him painful electric shocks against his protests, one can only wonder what government with its vastly greater authority and prestige can command of its subjects.
>
> From the film *Obedience* by Stanley Milgram (1965)

I turn now to the people who worked as employees of the communist state in the state security apparatus and who, as such, are legally and politically recognized today in the authoritative representations and interactions (legal acts, public performances, rituals). I present their symbolic journey through the 'democratic transition', undertaking an analysis of their personal accounts of change, which are given from the standpoint of the publicly stigmatized wrongdoers. Their predominant feeling is that they are hunted like witches, recognizing the events occurring in public life as a collective phobia underpinned by the desire to punish them. The publicly emergent representations of the past are proving divergent with their memories and versions.

During communism, the security officers were part of an 'invisible' cast of the powerful, enjoying high prestige based on fear and an image of omnipotence. They lived their lives in bizarre isolation from the rest of society. Society constituted the subject of their work, from which, for methodological reasons, they had to be secluded. Beginning in the early 1990s, the processes of separation from the rest of society continued – this time in a symbolic form, and in a reversed normative order. A number of legal Acts as well as mass media coverage started to normatively define them as 'perpetrators' and essentialize them as 'morally wrong'. The middle-ranking former officers of the state security apparatus gradually entered a stage of ambiguity and disorientation that reached its

peak when the Law and Justice Party came to power in 2005. This part of the book is concerned with the experience of inadequacy and displacement involved in being represented as evil in the post-communist Poland.

The transition that has taken place in Poland should be read as 'more than a technical process – of introducing democratic procedures and methods of electioneering, of forming political parties and non-governmental organizations, and so on. The "something more" includes meanings, feelings, the sacred ideas of morality, the non-rational – all ingredients of "legitimacy" or "regime consolidation" (that dry phrase) yet far broader than what analyses employing those terms usually provide' (Verdery 1999:25). The aspects of the transition I am interested in concern socio-political mechanisms mediating experiential realities of individuals engaged in personal quests for meaning. I scrutinize the memory politics, an important element of which is constituted by demonization and heroization/victimization of the actors belonging to the commemorated and judged past. Apart from commemorative and recognition practices, the project has consisted of the 'practices of accusation and accountability' (Feuchtwang 2000:60) through which certain groups of people have come to be marked as evil and have thus been pushed into liminal social positions and disoriented after falling from the top of the communist iceberg. Michael Taussig argued that demonization emerges from within cultures of rumour, fantasy and terror (Taussig 1987). In Poland, demonization is also fed by the condition in which dialogue and direct exchange are blocked by fixed and demonized representations in compliance with which people take actions and interpret their past and present lives. These commonly-staged demonization practices that essentialize agents of the repressive regimes simultaneously conceal the *banality of evil* (Arendt 1963) and prevent its deconstruction.

In this part of the book, I look at a recent attempt to establish a hegemonic discourse defining the communist past undertaken by the Law and Justice Party in Poland. This political formation, highly devoted to national and Catholic values, has worked towards the production of a coherent narrative about the communist past, promoting an image of essentialized, unitary identities, chargeable and awardable for an image of the past, legitimated in the present. The technology of state power enables state agents to pursue *the politics of past identities* intertwined with possibilities of producing authoritative interpretations of past events. The national and religious metaphors, institutional discourses and commemorative politics expressed through monumentalization of the past, as described in the first part of the book, worked towards an authoritative closure of the communist past in the present. For the former officers of the state apparatus of repression, however, the emergent version was clearly foreign, provoking reformulations of one's self-schemata or stronger adherence to one's beliefs.

The Accusations

Anthropologists who studied witchcraft have traditionally focused on the social contexts that activated waves of accusations. Jean La Fontaine argues that the social contexts fostering accusations are those involving some kind of conflict (La Fontaine 1998:13). In the post-1989 Poland, the conflict over meaning and interpretation of the communist past has been emerging as one of the insoluble issues. Variously positioned political players perceived the problem differently. The struggle over the attitude of the new polity towards its old and troublesome face became enmeshed in the issues of growing social and economic inequalities fed by the capitalist logic of reforms. Many segments of Polish society suffered economic and moral hardship during the initial years of transition. La Fontaine and others illustrate how 'witch-finding movements' arise 'from a general sense of social unease, a public view that there is an escalation of misfortune, indicating that witches are increasing in number and that their actions are affecting everyone' (La Fontaine 1998:16). The first decades of the transition, which most of people imagined would lead towards a total wellbeing, negatively verified this myth. The huge restructuring of industry and privatization led to high levels of unemployment. The older generations brought up in the communist condition found the process of adaptation to the new competitive market economy very frustrating and humiliating at times. The disenchanted and unsuccessful parts of society comprised the electorate of the populist parties and the Law and Justice Party, which offered a clear explanation for the present state of affairs and provided a coherent image of those responsible for it.

In 2005, in Poland, with the electoral victory of the Law and Justice Party, an umbrella of protection was withdrawn from the post-communist elites who, after a series of scandals, became widely recognized as corruptive and unjustly privileged. A wave of accusations stretching between the communist past and the post-communist present emerged as a reaction to what was understood by a large part of society as the anomalous position of advantage for the post-communist circles. That year, many people came to recognize the ambiguity of transition, which left the relations between communism and post-communist Poland unregulated. The newly emergent discourse helped them name what they felt to be so deeply disturbing in everyday life: in the aftermath of the transition, the post-communist elites abused their privileged position and, through illegal channels involving mafia and former security officers, robbed the nation. When the Law and Justice Party formed a government and achieved a significant majority in Parliament, the issue of decommunization was revitalized through institutional channels of the state, which granted its effective implementation.

The political discourse disseminated by the Law and Justice Party's members and supporters represented the Round Table Agreement as a *deal* in which the agents of the communist past were granted untouchable status. According to this view, supported by serious sociological studies (e.g. Staniszkis 2001), the shelter for the communist functionaries was constituted by the silent movement of the communist agents from politics towards economics, as well as by the agreed retreat from the idea of lustration, and limited interference in matters of the state security apparatus. The Law and Justice Party endorsed a *belated* programme of punishment and elimination in reference to the communist past and its various forms of contemporary persistence. By using the notion of a *deal*, the Law and Justice Party extended the earlier communist *betrayal* of patriotic values and extreme violence perpetrated by the communist regime over the *acts of illegality* that *contaminated the newborn,* post-1989 *Poland.* The responsibility for these past and present transgressions was ascribed to the conscious agents involved in the workings of communism, with particular stress being placed on the repressive apparatus, a form of power imagined as mysterious and polluted by violence and soviet servitude, and its eyes – i.e. the secret informers (*Tajni Współpracownicy - TW*) who happened to reside silently among the righteous ones, the opposition.

> […] but to tell the truth, […] what happened before 1989 is not the most central, though, it is also very important; still, the most crucial is what took place after. It is pivotal to describe the shape of our public life and – let's assume – also its economic aspect, in the light of the actions (I am talking about the pathological actions, not the legal, authorized ones) taken by the secret services. […] this sort of knowledge must be shown, because it must be revealed to the people in what sort of world they lived, and primarily, this world must be eliminated, meaning that we have to create a new, better Poland, where this sort of mechanism – the extremely pathological, incredibly harmful […] will not function („O nową Polskę…" Jarosław Kaczyński, The Prime Minister of Poland, cited after Polish Radio 1, 18 October 2006).

A series of accusations that vigorously filled Polish public life in 2005-2007 targeted the two main categories recognized as 'impure' and deserving of exclusion: the 'functionaries of the communist state' - especially the former officers of the security apparatus - and their secret informants marked as 'co-operators' (*współpracownicy*). Such labelling constitutes a *dividing practice* (Foucault 1982) realized through the symbols invented to mark collectivities (Merry 1992) aimed at objectifying and fixing the past. The numerous instances of allegations, which saturated Polish public life, can be viewed as a means of clarifying the ambiguous state of past relationships and transition, as well as solving the questions of responsibility - both for communism and for what came after it.

Law and ordering the past

The key words describing the Law and Justice program relating to the communist past are remembering, preventing amnesia, disclosure, historical truth, purification and justice. An example of discursive performance by the main politician from the Law and Justice Party briefly illustrates the described political program. On the 18th of October 2006 during a radio interview, The Polish Prime Minister, Jarosław Kaczyński, stated:

> […]this knowledge must be shown, because it must be revealed to the people in what sort of world they lived, and primarily, this world must be eliminated, meaning that we have to create a new, better Poland, where this sort of mechanism – the extremely pathological, incredibly harmful […] will not function („O nową Polskę…").

Creating an image of the past as pathological provides the resources to talk about radical changes and helps to build up one's own missionary identity based on the contrast with such a past and the people who are pigeonholed as authors and co-producers of that time. As often underlined by the President, Lech Kaczyński, the changes in *the lawful state* are achieved through the creation of normative and punitive codes. Legality is the key concept and point of reference in the policy-making of the Law and Justice Party. In the next chapter, describing the trial of a security officer, I will focus on the potential of law for describing the past and shaping the present, as well as on the connections between the regimes of legality and the psyche of the actors involved in its performance.

The post-1989 legal framework *in status nascendi* concerned with the past regime consists of a few components. On the 18th of December, 1998, the Polish parliament established the IPN - which institutionally embraces most of the current policies concerning the communist past. Apart from *the Act on the IPN*, the interpretative discourse on the communist time comprises a number of scattered acts concerning various aspects of that past and its remnants. There is a numerously amended Act stating the obligation of disclosing one's cooperation with or work for the state security apparatus between 1944 and 1990 that binds widely defined public figures. There are Acts defining such categories as veterans, and victims of oppressions, along with their privileges and rights. There is a project defining the category of a communist functionary, which aims at depriving people falling into this category of their privileges and status. There are legal Acts concerning medals, military ranks, official rituals, and commemorative practices.

Such a legal order is formulated in a peculiar, eclectic genre characterizing the post-socialist geographies. Legal pluralism implies here the reliance on and continuity with the legacy of the previous system, with its simultaneous selective denial. This denial is achieved, among other measures, through the insertion of democratising discourse and other transnational discursive flows, such as the

one concerning universal human rights or supremacy of the European legal order. It is important to note, for instance, that the deployment of the human rights discourse in the legal frameworks concerning the authoritarian and repressive past differs locally. As much as human rights may seem universal and global, the actual contextualization and legal utilization of such a discourse may bring different outcomes and take on different meanings. As opposed to the democratising societies of Africa - and the South African Republic serves as a good example here - where the human rights discourse is used to guide 'the population away from punitive retribution […] turning the notion of reconciliation into the 'discursive linchpin' of the post-authoritarian governments' (Wilson 2000:78), in Poland the centralizing political project created by the Law and Justice Party focuses on amnesia prevention, purification and punitive retribution, which dim the possibility of reconciliation. Such an approach to the issue of settling the accounts with the past results in constant attempts by the security officers to distance themselves from guilt[108].

If a man works in a cesspool, he must dirty himself a little

The security officers in their narratives talk about the past in a radically different way. Andrzej, who was a volunteer in the Internal Security Corpus, narrates the first years of communism in the following way:

> Andrzej: there was nothing left, well, the kind of groups – those, supposedly partisans, who were having fun and, most of the time, were administered by the priests. When there was a mass going on in the church, or something of this sort, evensong, he [the priest] sent the women back home and told the men to stay.
>
> Me: And what did he say?
>
> Andrzej: Oh, and he was saying [irritated], well, he instigated them against communism, that they [the communists] do not believe in God and so on. To take weapons and fight when they [the communists] came, well… so the priests, half of them were *volksdeutsche*. And they now dare to accuse those, who were coming to Bezpieka. But about those, who were *volksdeutsche*, they say not a word. One day, people went to confess. The day after, the military policeman took them away. So all of this is concealed, they are lying about everything.

This fragment of Andrzej's narrative provides a point of access to the interpretative frameworks that have enabled Andrzej to understand the world and direct his actions in the past. He focuses here on the clarification of the position and

108 Compare also Mink and Neumayer who write about 'an international circulation of "grammars" of reconciliation' facilitated by modern technologies that characterizes contemporary European societies (2013:24).

features of the political agents, who are being glorified today, and whom he fought against in the past. He moves on to the nationalist partisans, whom he introduces dismissively with the adverb 'supposedly' or by talking about their military actions with the euphemism 'having fun'. By telling a story of a priest sending the women home, Andrzej points to the anti-communist alliance linking the partisan groups and the Church. Eventually, he mirrors the naming strategy used today against the state security apparatus and describes the priests and, indirectly, the partisans as traitors who worked for the German occupiers. In his narrative, Andrzej uses the themes characteristic of the interpretative framework strengthened and disseminated through the communist propaganda apparatus. Through such stories, he tells and performs a moral evaluation of the present reality. His preoccupation with the past is context-dependent and comes as a reaction to the growing visibility of the heroes/victims, whom he used to treat as a threat. It is further strengthened by a condition of intimidation felt by Andrzej due to his past active involvement in the organization, which is now considered criminal. The telling of a story understood as a moral action functions as a defence mechanism. The possibility of externalizing the moral delimitation and description of the politically engaged agents gives Andrzej a sense of security. Such a sense of security was enabled by the situation of an interview in which I, as an interlocutor, practically did not intervene in Andrzej's stream of utterances, evoking in him a sense of approval.

> Andrzej: I remember, I remember everything. I remember how, let's say, the most important thing, how people were being murdered. They killed thirty thousand people. […] There were these… AKowce[109], and there were Banderowce-Akowce. But our government concealed it. These were not Akowce, they were regular bandits – Banderwoce-Akowce, that's how they were called. There was also Ukraine. So, now, they changed it the way that they conferred the Banderowce[110] to Ukraine. And this is not true, the Ukrainians were Burbowce[111], and these ones were Banderowce. And they were walking through the night in platoons, and they were surrounding houses, they were walking into the flats and they were shooting these people – thirty thousand of them they killed[112].

109 He refers here to the AK soldiers – the Polish underground insurgency army.

110 He refers to the Ukrainian national movement led by Stepan Bandera during WWII and its aftermath.

111 I was unable to find a political group under this name.

112 Perhaps Andrzej refers to the assault on the Polish settlements, which began in 1942. The Ukrainian nationalists attacked, at night, Polish villages in the Eastern part of Poland, killing Polish families. Named the Volhynian slaughter, the killings are considered a massive ethnic cleansing operation performed in an Eastern region of Poland between 1942 and 1945 during the German occupation of this region. The action was coordinated by the Ukrainian Insurgence Army together with local Ukrainian peasants.

The moral tone of Andrzej's narrative is reinforced by the inclusion of a story of mass murder. He oddly attributes the large-scale killings of the Polish civilian population to the anti-communist agents belonging to the Church and the underground army alliance. He makes claims about the forged nature of contemporary historical accounts, treating them as naturally influenced by the new constellation of power. He ascribes the responsibility for the killings perpetrated by the Ukrainian Insurgence Army to the Polish partisans, stating that the two groups were mixed up in order to confuse people and conceal the true nature of the Polish partisan groups. Such an interpretative framework has been partially produced by the communist propaganda to which Andrzej, as a security agent and a communist activist, was exposed. Another fragment of his narrative hints at the material remnants of the communist propaganda, the artefacts of which still constitute the source of legitimacy for Andrzej's claims, as well as serving as interpretative devices for classifying the present events in political terms.

> Me: And during the [German] occupation, was there a different sort of AK?
>
> Andrzej: AK was created in 1942. It was created in 1942. Before, there were the Peasants' Battalions - and this was a proper party, there I do not have[113] that those from the Peasants' Battalions killed a man. All of the names belong to AKowce and I have all of that, every single group. Like the one who killed that man… - that Wislak, he killed 170 people and now they are giving a service for him[114] [slightly laughing]. So that one, he wrote that letter and they sued him in the court[115].

Thousands of Poles were murdered and many others fled the area in fear of further massacres.

113 By 'I do not have', Andrzej refers to a book titled 'Those, who died fighting for the People's Authority'. The book lists the communist agents who died in an active fight in the name of communist statehood. By saying 'I do not have', Andrzej means that the names of the soldiers from BCh are not mentioned in his book on the side of the perpetrators. Note the similarity of the construction of the book to the one published by the members of the heroes/victims' Association listing the vignettes of the heroes/victims, presented in a more expanded version, scrupulously backed up by the state documents.

114 Andrzej refers here to the last partisan, the unveiling of whose monument was described in chapter six.

115 The last phrase in this fragment 'So that one, he wrote that letter and they sued him in the court' refers to the story of Janek, the security officer belonging to the younger generation, who recently faced trial accused of committing a communist crime, and whose father – an agent of communism - had been shot by an underground army group in the 1940s. Janek's trial is the theme of the next chapter. What is interesting in this fragment is the logic with which Andrzej links and interprets the facts of Janek's life. He met Janek three times in his life. Once, they met in front of the IPN, where they accidentally realized the commonality of their position – they came to demand from the IPN access to some files. Janek wanted to see his father's files, so did Andrzej. According to both

In this fragment, Andrzej classifies the now glorified underground soldiers as murderers by referring to the source, reliable in his eyes, a book published by the History Institute of the Communist Party in 1970. This object, a relic of the previous regime, is uncritically used by Andrzej as an objective record of facts. His recent affectively-loaded involvement in resisting the current memory politics, which has denied the legitimacy of the interpretative framework he has been using, manifests itself in notes taken by Andrzej in pencil and pen in the margins of the book next to the names of the people he knew or had heard of. On one page, for example, he indicated the pseudonym of a partisan who, he believes, killed someone he knew well.

Similarly to the first generation of security officers, the second generation of employees worked out an image of the political opposition and the political reality in which their actions as officers were justified. They further elaborated a vision of their own role in maintaining social order.

> Stefan: Mainly, I think that people found in their illegal actions a sort of light adrenaline. Meaning, you know, I cannot really say that it was so ideologically definite. It could have relied on emotions. So we did feel emotional, since it is difficult not to feel emotions when something is going on.

In this fragment, one of the officers from the second generation communicates ways in which he imagined the oppositionists. This imagery of the adversaries, as those who found excitement in the oppositional activity and who were not fully-fledged idealists devoted to a particular political program, indirectly functions as a strategy of justification and distancing from one's own responsibility for committed transgressions. Further, by talking in the plural about the security officers as human beings, who also feel emotions, Stefan attempts to break the image, which he believes to be prevalent in society, of the security officers being violent and ruthless.

> Me: Do you think that the repressions [in the 1980s] were too weak?

---

men's knowledge, their fathers were murdered by the partisans. Janek took an address from Andrzej and went to visit him once. Andrzej showed Janek a book in which his father's name was listed among other victims of partisans' violent actions. The second time they met was when Janek suggested that Andrzej could be a relevant informant for me and he drove me to his place. Janek told Andrzej about a letter he wrote to the IPN protesting against falsifying history and making his access to his father's files difficult. Independently of this event, Janek was accused of committing a communist crime and faced a trial. Andrzej links both events causatively, believing that the letter sent to the IPN caused the accusation.

> Franek: No. Ania, the repressions were not too weak. I think that it is fortunate that they were as they were since, if these were the sort of repressions you are thinking about and I am guessing, in such a case now, I will tell you Ania, it would be… at this moment, all of these miserable constrained oppositionists and so on; because they were constrained indeed. It would not look the way it goes now; all that boasting now. If there was plenty of evidence for a brutal behaviour and so on. I am telling you, it is better it was the way it was. I do not consider that it was so brutal.
>
> […]
>
> And I will underline one thing – those who wanted to cooperate, cooperated. Those who were forced, firstly, they did not have to be forced. And if they wanted to gain something this way, well, it is hard luck.

Franek, another second-generation officer, expresses through his narrative a belief that the repression committed by the institution for which he worked was not as severe as is being represented today. He perceives the lack of decisive steps taken against the security officers, who are currently so widely accused of committing serious repression, as evidence of the lack of severe transgressions committed by the institution for which he worked. He further distances himself and the security apparatus as a whole from responsibility by highlighting the voluntary aspect of the cooperation or gains derived by the informers from acts of cooperation.

> Me: Why did this job make sense to you?
>
> Mirek: It made sense to me. The reasoning behind the existence of the secret services – as these sorts of services were, are and will be… was in reconnaissance, in anticipation of what can happen – I saw there was a point in it and this is what I tried to do. Because as I said – these sorts of services were, are and will be. The fact that the job isn't always clean… perhaps we could talk about the ethics, but that does not mean that the people who work in such services around the world are evil people. Simply, if a man works in a cesspool, he must dirty himself a little. And if it comes to the methods of work – there were various methods. One side wanted to outwit the other.
>
> Mirek: […] The opposition was very deeply sussed out thanks to the operational methods – mostly thanks to OZI [*Osobowe Źródła Informacji* - informers]. You cannot imagine who and on which level… no technical solutions… technical solutions can confirm something, yet, you cannot replace a good, well-positioned agent with technology. This device cannot replace a man because it can register what we are talking about, but to ask me a question, or to provoke a situation, make someone do something…

Mirek justifies his past activities by pointing to other nations' secret police forces, which are an inseparable aspect of statehood. The existence of similar structures in other localities or in different historical periods, under different systems, normalizes the past actions and makes their justification easier. On the other

hand, Mirek allows himself some moral considerations. However, these considerations are very easily overshadowed by a reference to the immense scale of cooperation by the civilian population with the apparatus of repressions, even among core members of the opposition. This collaboration leads to a sense of impunity, as the opposition is viewed by the security officers as a snake that ate its own tail by informing on one another.

> Henryk: Each employee of the security had someone. And that someone knew something. But it was not the way they announce it now, since they took a hold of the files of the snitches. This is not the truth, this is a lie. Each employee had his own person with whom he normally met. He named 'this one and that one, this and that' – normally, it went without recording. There were no files, there was nothing.

Henryk, a member of the first generation of security officers, recalls that the contacts between the security officers and the informants were a question of individual skills, and they were not usually recorded in the files. The file records seem to be a part of the professionalization process, which was gradual and implemented to a fuller degree by the second generation of officers.

The style of cooperation with the agents further depended on the sort of people one worked with, and the purpose of the cooperation. Stefan worked in the Department responsible for 'the education'. He thus 'took care' of university employees in Marianowice:

> Stefan: Our room was very cosy, just like at home.
>
> Me: Did you prepare tea and coffee in the room or was there a separate kitchen?
>
> Stefan: We were preparing coffee in the rooms.
>
> Me: Immersion heater?
>
> Stefan: We had the… the electric pots. Each of us had a glass. Actually, more… we had a full set, because it happened that we invited someone over for this coffee… or even during conversations, because we had to talk in that building, we were treating the interlocutors with coffee. Our own coffee!
>
> […]
>
> Of course, I achieved what I wanted to achieve, without getting into any sort of tussling or brawls. Just like with you now – the desk, someone is putting forward his credo, I say mine [.]. Questions. I persuaded those, whom it was possible to persuade, who could have been straightened up, let's say. Those who were impossible were impossible.

Stefan presents almost pleasant memories of the conversations he had with the university employees. He even depicts himself as a hospitable security officer, who shared his own coffee with the people he had invited over for a talk. As much as Stefan's recollecting through talking is a clearly selective process, my

impression was that Stefan did commit a number of transgressions, mostly psychological abuses but also physical ones. The fact that many of the informants did develop a 'quality' sort of relationship with their officers was evident to me, especially in the case of the second generation of officers.

As an institution, the state security apparatus has its own history. It brought up two generations of officers and furnished them with frameworks for interpreting Polish history. It offered them a sense of belonging to a national community, in fact, a special position in this community – that of guardians. Yet, when the communist system collapsed, the framework and the national community were reformulated. The position of the security officers was also changed, forcibly.

Verification without verification

The issue of restoring justice in the Polish post-communist condition has a two-dimensional structure, which mirrored in this book. Firstly, it implies the symbolic recognition of the heroes and victims who suffered under communism. This has been accomplished both through honouring them with a place in a pantheon of national heroes, and through more direct compensations such as special pensions. The second component of settling the accounts has dealt with the question of the perpetrators – their actual and symbolic punishment. Here, the focus was on the security officers, who were gradually being excluded from the polity through legal and discursive measures.

One of the measures taken was to discontinue the veterans' pension privileges conceded to the communist soldiers and agents by the communist authorities. Below is a fragment of a transcript of a conversation that occurred between Andrzej, a communist agent active during the Stalinist period, and Janek, an officer belonging to the second generation. Janek asked Andrzej about the pension in my presence in order to show me the injustice embedded in the current project of settling the accounts with the communist past.

> Jan: And you, because they took away this pension from you, didn't they? The veterans' pension… recently
>
> Andrzej: They decreased it [irritated]… they took it away as if it was normal! For being 'a fixer of the People's Republic of Poland' [*utrwalacz władzy ludowej*].
>
> Jan: So they took away that which you already had?
>
> Andrzej: I have the pension only from my work, and the veterans' pension they stopped.

Jan: What year did they do it to you? The Ducks[116]?

Andrzej: Well, it is already four years.

Jan: Then, the Ducks must have done it! [with satisfaction]

Andrzej: Yes! Yes!... No!

Jan: Well, not the Ducks, because…

Andrzej: Now, mostly at that time…

Jan: Most probably it was Krzaklewski, who was ruling at that time

Andrzej: At that time… it was at that time when that *volksdeutsche* Płażyński… Because I wrote that *volksdeutsche*, because, it is even written in a book that Płażyński – so I wrote this way that

Jan: Well, so this was the term of the AWS

Andrzej: Yes! The Jews! The Jews!

Jan: The AWS – Krzaklewski

Andrzej: I went to ZBoWiD. I went to ZBoWiD in Marianowice and I said 'They took it away', […]. 'Who took it away from you?' 'The Jews!'. 'Sir, this is not nice, do not say like this'. 'What am I saying? I will shout! Who did take it away from me? The Jews! A normal thing!'

This short fragment of conversation illustrates how, during an interaction, two people who used to be involved in strengthening the power of the communist regime interactively reinforce today a sense of togetherness vis-à-vis the others, who are defined by their post-*Solidarity* background. Through talking, they establish a collective frame for experiencing a sense of injustice and witch-hunting directed at them – the security officers. Andrzej's closing story of a visit to the veterans' association, in which he accuses Jews (the post-*Solidarity* politicians) of taking away his pension, illustrates a sense of rage and emotional reaction to the processes of exclusion and condemnation. Calling the post-*Solidarity* activists *volksdeutsche* and Jews could be read as the legacy of the complex and conflicted history of the country, pointing at layers of prejudices and the large repertoire for naming enemies with historical and ethnic labels available in Polish culture.

It was only in April 1990, after the PZPR was officially dissolved, that the *Sejm* (Polish lower parliamentary chamber) passed a law that led to the restructuring of the state apparatus. The law implied the transformation of the Citizen's Militia into the Police, while the state security became the State Protection Office (*Urząd Ochrony Państwa, UOP*). Significantly, the new head of the UOP

116 The Ducks (Kaczki) is a disrespectful nickname used for the Kaczyńscy brothers running the Law and Justice Party.

was the editor of a Catholic weekly. Soon, he took the post of the Minister of Internal Affairs and started the process of 'vetting' among the security agents (Dudek, Paczkowski 2005:232). The employees of the state security apparatus had to reapply for their positions. The applications were considered by a Commission, the membership of which, in the case of Marianowice, included oppositional activists repressed by the security officers in the 1980s. The Commission analyzed the applications without interviewing the applicants in person. The decisions were sent by post and a right of appeal was granted. However, according to my interlocutors, the appeal procedure was carried out in the same way, by the same Commission, through the post.

> Franek: There was a vetting procedure. It was 1992. It was a very nasty formula in my opinion, because, I got a piece of paper […]. This is how the verification was made. Verification without verification. Meaning, nobody called you to stand in front of the Commission, even though there was a Commission – the Verification Commission. And out of this Commission, I knew its president very well, because, by chance, he used to be an object of interest to my department. So, he was presiding over this Commission and I got this sort of trite paper in A4; 'bla-bla' and in the last paragraph it was written in a very ugly style […] 'he does not fulfil the requirements, he does not hold moral qualifications to work in the Ministry of Interior Affairs'.

In Franek's view, ninety per cent of the employees of the state security apparatus were deprived of their posts and had to look for other ways of earning a living[117]. Their life paths cannot be generalized. In the chapters to follow, I will introduce three people who worked in different departments and who found themselves in very divergent positions in the 2000s. All of them perceived the vetting procedure as humiliating. The second-generation officers perceive themselves as professionals. Hence, the denial of their qualifications during the vetting procedure seemed to them a sign of political revenge. In their opinion, there was nobody in the country who was better trained in the kind of work the secret police should carry out.

117 Once deprived of their authorized positions, the security officers kept their contact networks, which often implied business and criminal connections. Eliminating them from the state structures opened up the way for them to use previously secret knowledge as well as what used to be professional contacts for their own purposes. The mass media also announced that the security officers stole piles of files and earned money blackmailing those who cooperated with disclosure of the materials.

Recapitulation

The Law and Justice Party agenda of memory politics implemented through the state channels significantly impacted upon the security officers' modes of recalling the past and interpreting it in the present. Clearly, their modes of remembering the past diverge from the politicized versions disseminated by the Law and Justice Party, and they differ from historical accounts, which flattened their experience by categorizing it in a canonical image of the institution of terror researched on the basis of the files. The people I worked with spent a number of hours in that institution. They felt at home and secure there. They hold many pleasant memories of it. Yet, they also remember their own fears and humiliations. They remember being abused by their superiors or being sent for the first time into angry crowds. Bearing in mind that visions of good and evil are very personal and thus ambiguous as opposed to the unambiguous visions embedded in the narratives of nation-states (Lambek 2005), I will turn now to the ethnography of such uncertain and deeply personal engagements of the security officers with the emergent hegemonic discourse.

Chapter Eight
Excavating Memories of Political Violence in a 'Lawful' State: a case-study of a security officer's trial

> Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; it does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge.
>
> Toni Morrison, *The Nobel Prize Lecture 1993*

In this chapter, I focus on a trial understood as an essential institutional trigger in the process of the disorientation of a security officer accused of committing a 'communist crime'. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the selected instances of interactions that took place in the courtroom in order to give a sense of a narrative styles of the heroes/victims and the security officers conditioned by the legal setting. The second part of the analysis centres on the position of the judge and his power to influence and represent the trial. The last part takes a closer look at the accused outside the courtroom in order to study ways in which the trial impacted upon his memory and self-constructs. The research material on which this chapter is based was gathered during Janek's trial both in and outside the courtroom. Because the judge rejected my request to record the hearings, I took very detailed field notes in the courtroom, which I later transcribed and compared with the official court transcripts.

Settling the accounts with the abusive regimes of power, which dominated many countries during the Cold War era, is seen as an element of the processes of democratization and reconstruction (Borneman 1997). The contemporary model of accounting for the large-scale political violence employs legal solutions that centre on the restoration of the victims' sense of dignity and justice by establishing a forum for their voices, and by the successful integration of their stories into a larger national narrative. Specific projects of memory politics shape the ways in which past violence is narrated and experienced in the present by various groups and individuals.

While the bulk of the literature on trauma focuses on ways in which narrative helps people to restructure their selves in reference to a disturbing past, the studies of interactions in legal settings tend to argue that legal discourse constrains and flattens people's experience, turning their narrative into legal jargon

deprived of a link with the sense of real experience (Conley and O'Barr 1998). This case-study describes an ethnographic account of a legal setting in which the victims have the opportunity for an affective enactment of their stories, while the security officers are constrained in their acts of narrating the past. In this chapter, the court is approached as a forum for speaking about violence, enabled by the memory project. The memory project is constructed in a manner that symbolically excludes the security officers from the new, democratic polity. The courtroom is one of the authoritative spaces in which this process of exclusion has the greatest hold on the subjects subdued by it. In the conditions of testimony emergent in the Polish post-communist state, we can learn a lot about humiliation and suffering, yet very little about the culture of violence from the perpetrators' point of view.

The trial as a local enactment of the memory politics

In this chapter, I focus on one aspect of the policy of 'purification' and 'disclosure' as represented by the actions of a section of the IPN dedicated to prosecutions. I look at a particular legal intervention by this department - the trial of Janek, a former security officer charged with committing 'a communist crime'. The notion of a 'communist crime' was legally defined for the first time in Poland by the Act on IPN (1998). The Act defines 'communist crimes' as follows: acts committed by functionaries of the communist state in the period between 17 September 1939 and 31 December 1989, consisting in the use of repressive measures or other violations of human rights with respect to individuals or groups of people or acts that already constituted crimes in the understanding of the Polish Penal Act in force at the time of the preparation of the crime. There is no statute of limitations for a communist crime, which is recognized as a crime against humanity. The statute of limitations for a crime of homicide committed by a functionary of a communist state passes in 2030, while for other acts recognized as communist crimes the period of prescription ends in 2020. The main aim of such legal cases is defined as an examination of the circumstances of the crime and the acknowledgement of the victims' identities; hence, the death of the accused does not limit the possibility of trying the case (*Informator Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* 2007:16). As noted by Genowefa Rejman, such a legal construction results in the emergence of various kinds of communist crime for which the statute of limitations differ. The distinctive feature of a communist crime is that it was committed by a state functionary. This crime is characterized by a direct intention. As Rejman puts it: "the perpetrator identifies with the system within which (s)he performs the acts of repressions or violation of individu-

al or group rights. (S)he does not recognize these acts as forbidden; on the contrary, (s)he recognizes them as legally justified. In this way (s)he solidifies the totalitarian system". According to subjective features, a communist crime is an individual crime. However, Rejman suggests that the complexity embedded in the legal notion of a communist crime obscures the possibility of indicating the real perpetrators, determining who is more to blame - the individual perpetrator or the social and historical context within which a communist crime was committed - and setting the limits of individual responsibility and fault (Rejman 2006:12-13). She also recognizes the complexity of this particular legal construction and the difficulty in interpreting specific individual acts as communist crimes (Rejman 2006:6). While the legal complexity and actual difficulty in judging communist crimes constitute a very fascinating topic, I will focus here on the ethnographic example of a legal case and its consequences for social and individual ways of conceptualizing and remembering the past.

During my fieldwork year in Marianowice, two cases were concluded in the court of the first resort – both resulting in jail sentences for the former functionaries of the state security apparatus for committing 'communist crimes'. The infrequency of such trials contributed to the *bad luck* paradigm amongst the security officers. The people directly subjected to the current complex policy of 'disclosure' and 'purification' read it as an arbitrary project that may turn out to be personally momentous. This is one reason why the victims/heroes reveal a strong tendency to an excessive performance of their identity, while the 'impure' subjects display an anxiety over their fate and adapt a strategy of silently waiting things out and distancing themselves from responsibility. When an 'impure' subject happens to face a trial, both he and his colleagues perceive it to be the result of bad luck. 'Have you heard what a horrible misfortune happened to Janek?', one of his colleagues asked me over the phone after Janek's sentence was announced. 'Janek is a victim of settling of the past. The dramaturgy of these events escapes reality in all kinds of ways', another of his colleagues explained to me in a café. Janek, who could not comprehend why it was he who was being accused rather than his superiors or prosecutors at that time, would undoubtedly have agreed with these words.

The IPN employees themselves admit that investigations into particular cases are more arbitrary than systematic due to the gaps in historical knowledge on the prosecutors' side, and because of the kilometres of files that are still waiting to be arranged by the archivists. The former security officers add that they destroyed many files in 1989 and 1990, often on their superiors' orders but also on their own initiative. Hence, a reliable reconstruction of some events is, according to them, impossible. Consequently, the indictments that are being produced by the prosecution department are sometimes perceived by the accused as random and flimsy.

Disambiguated language and identity performance

The trial I am about to describe concerns a few individuals who, according to the current law, have acquired a new legal status either as *former functionaries of the communist state*, or as *grieved parties*. It is important to note that the legal categories to which I refer are constructed in a polarized way. The heroes/victims, the legal officials, and the security officers all act in accordance with the disambiguated language while experiencing the legal situation.

Janek was accused of exceeding his sphere of competence while interrogating an opposition activist, Tomasz, by threatening him with violence in order to obtain his testimony during the 1980s. The IPN prosecuting attorney classified what happened during the interrogations of Tomasz as *via compulsiva,* i.e. a prohibited method of obtaining evidence by influencing the accused, by threats or promises. In the new post-socialist legal language, this can be called a *communist crime*. In communist times, it was a crime but the statute of limitations would preclude a prosecution. The new law made it possible to re-open the case.

That the disambiguated mode of classifying the past in the present prevailed among the testifying witnesses was made clear to me before one of the hearings. The witness, an ex-oppositionist, was waiting outside the courtroom until it was his turn to testify. I took my chance to approach him and introduced myself as an anthropologist who was working on the topic of the perception of the communist past in the present. His extremely swift reply sounded quite typical: *are you writing about us or about them?* The transcripts below follow the same line of logic.

This fragment comes from the testimony of a grieved party – an opposition activist who acted quite emotionally at the trials. He perceived the trial as a possibility to express his heroic and victimized self, for which he had received no other official recognition. He belongs to the 'lost' part of the *Solidarity* activists, who neither walked into a political life nor experienced social advancement. I would like to draw attention to his usage of personal pronouns (underlined in the transcript), which delimit social and political belonging.

> The Court: How do you estimate the role of Tomasz in the opposition?
>
> Michal: We did not know how to deal with these people. Such *esbek*[118] was given a reply 'I refuse to answer'. This is what Tomasz taught us. You mustn't talk to them, because they are ready to use everything. Mr. Janek knows how it was with the passport [he looks at Janek]. You [plural], you messieurs[119] [looking at Janek], you

118 A colloquial way of referring to the secret security officers taken from the abbreviation of the official name of the institution - the security services (*Służba Bezpieczeństwa*, SB).

119 From what I found out, Janek did not participate in this event.

> locked me in the room. [The judge smiles]. The metropolitan archbishop did not know how to behave[120]. I have to come back to it. […]
>
> This Sunday, we had an opportunity to see how SB broke people's lives. […] We really do not want to come back to it.
>
> […]
>
> Could we have suspected the collapse of this system? How could we have taken revenge? To drop a leaflet was the most we could have done.

To begin with, what these hearings clearly indicate is that the current legal framework allows the expression and fostering of the kind of narratives in which the division lines are drawn between adversaries in the past, extending this conflict into the present time. I illustrate this by underlining the usage of personal pronouns in the context of the hearings. The grieved parties overtly use the personal pronoun *we* as opposed to *I* during their speech acts in court. They also make abundant use of *them* as opposed to *you* when referring to the former officers of the apparatus of repression. I interpret this linguistic strategy as an expression, firstly, of a strong identification with the whole oppositional circle that provides the raison d'être for the status of a grieved party of a particular set of actors[121]. Secondly, despite the fact that the trial I observed concerned the possible criminal acts of one person, during the speech acts of the grieved parties, the responsibility was repeatedly extended beyond the single case. The notion of their collective responsibility bounces back and forth in the words of the grieved parties and, as will be visible later, such a position is also taken by the judge. I would argue that the current legal and memory framework as well as its intensive consumption via the mass media encourages such speech acts, which later strengthen the antagonistic perception of the social reality.

The security officers, in their testimonies, are less focused on exposing the 'groupness', and more attuned to separating themselves from the collective label of evil communist agents. For this purpose, they use what I call a language of distantiation. In this fragment, a former secret security officer who participated in the search of Tomasz's house testifies. I would like to draw attention to his repeatedly indirect answers to the initial question of the judge. Until he is

120 He refers to the case of the newly appointed archbishop, who was accused of collaborating with the state security apparatus as described in chapter four.

121 This is the case despite the fact that the former oppositional circle is extremely divided and full of hidden grudges. Michal is an example of a loser who fought for freedom yet gained nothing out of it. During interviews I conducted with him, he recurrently returned to the theme of the wily *Solidarity* activists, who managed to enhance their lives thanks to their access to power. He juxtaposed this image with that of his own life, namely, no money or career, but honesty and righteousness.

pushed to answer precisely, he continues with his indirection. In the second part of the transcript, I have underlined his involuntary and recurring statements that seek to diminish his involvement in the workings of the secret services apparatus.

> The Court: Where did you work, what sort of function did you act out in this period […]?
>
> Damian: I was admitted to work on the 16 of December 1979.
>
> Court: You were admitted to work where?
>
> Damian: At that time, it was still a voivodeship headquarters.
>
> Court: During these years - 1983-1984?
>
> Damian: Yes, I was a regular functionary.
>
> Court: A functionary of what?
>
> Damian: Of Department 3 of the Secret Security Services.
>
> Court: Were any actions taken against Tomasz during this period? The court is interested only in Tomasz.
>
> Damian: There were, but these were not criminal cases, as this one. He was not called in. It was an operational case.
>
> Court: Did you interrogate or have any direct contact with Tomasz?
>
> Damian: I did not interrogate. I am not an investigating officer, I do not know how to do it. Still, I do not exclude it; however, I do not remember whether I was present during such activities. I do not remember.
>
> […]
>
> Damian: I was an operational officer and I did not deal with the investigations.
>
> Court: But how did it happen, because you said… [she refers to the fact of Damian being present at the search at Tomasz's place - as reported by the accused]
>
> Damian: Precisely, as part of the duties which I performed at that time, obviously as ordered by my superior, because I would not have gone by myself, we were going for some actions.
>
> Court: But regarding the interrogation…
>
> Damian: No. Anyhow […] I had been in service for four years at that time, honestly, I did not know much. […] I always had a senior colleague next to me […] I was too young. […] And, I wanted to add, that it often looked this way – let the young one go, he shall learn something.

Damian, through the use of indirection, communicates his lack of identification with the institution for which he worked. He uses a common strategy of diminishing his responsibility and involvement by presenting himself as a low-ranking

employee who simply followed orders. The strategy of distancing and transferring of responsibility is common among the former security officers today. This strategy intensifies proportionately to the person's involvement in the legal procedure. Janek uses the strategy of distancing himself from guilt to a much larger extent than Damian. This clearly results from the fact that he is undergoing an actual trial as an accused person, which forces him to reconfigure his conceptual schemata. His linguistic instances of distancing himself from guilt are also a consequence of the proceedings in court. Here is an example of that; The grieved party called Michal testified in court. As a grieved party, Michal had an opportunity to look at the IPN archives and read the documents that the security officers had collected in regard to his person. As a grieved party, he also had a chance to ask for the names of those of his friends or other people around him at that time who gave information about him to the state security apparatus, meaning that they had cooperated. In this fragment, Michal explains how the contradiction in his statements to the court may have arisen. He testified previously that Tomasz had told him that Janek had beaten him. Tomasz, though, maintains that Janek did not beat him and only threatened him with the possible use of violence.

> The Court: Can you take a position on that?
>
> Michal: Well, it is difficult to take a position in regard to that concerning how many years have passed, but there was a common acquaintance of ours – Maria, and she said 'Listen, Tomasz was beaten'. […]
>
> Janek: You said during the hearing that you heard from Tomasz that I hit him. Do you sustain this statement?
>
> Michal: Yes, I could have said it, I sustain this. But it was over 20 years ago. She could have come to me… only that now, [turning to the court], I can say that I know, that Maria was your [turning to Janek] secret informer, aka Ania. Perhaps this way she was trying to authenticate herself. You kept her in jail for five months.
>
> Janek: Why did you say…
>
> Michal: Because this is how I remembered that. Later, she left for America.
>
> […]
>
> Janek: So, if you are convinced that Maria was an informer, do you still believe her words?
>
> Michal: Indeed, I do not believe her at all. Not even in her arrest do I believe.

What grew in Janek's mind out of this short exchange I learned just after the hearings, when I left the court together with him and walked the main street of the city. In such moments, he usually produced a stream of words that were very emotionally loaded. This time, he said the following: 'Yeah, that had been the

initiative of my bosses, they had spread the gossip concerning me, it immediately started to circulate in the city… that Janek hit Tomasz, yeah'. When I asked him why they would have done it, he replied: 'because I often disagreed with them' – an argumentation that he used in a more extensive manner during our first meeting to introduce himself as an independent thinker who was capable of critical opinion in regard to the institution he worked for. At that get-together, while talking about his job he focused in detail on three stories of incidents in which he had helped some people and had at the same time shown resistance to his superiors. These stories played a very important part in the presented narrative of the self, as they were intended to authenticate and prove his distinction from the institution. The testimony of Michal surely strengthens this self-image of separateness and non-identification that Janek has been gradually working out in response to the instances of legality that concerned him as an officer. Interestingly, he could have dismissed Michal's words by classifying them as lies – as he often did in regard to the words of witnesses. However, at that point Janek reoriented himself and became attuned to the selection of cues that would allow him to represent himself as fitting more comfortably into the present conditions, under which the state security apparatus is highly criticized.

The trial I observed served as a stage on which the grieved parties had a chance to perform their feelings of moral self-righteousness, which are formative for their subjectivities and a sense of justice. However, those grieved parties who testified and who did not hold the status of main accuser, and were thus performing only auxiliary functions, may have found this experience insufficient for their need of compensation for their sufferings. It is crucial to note that some such witnesses, while testifying, took the opportunity to act out their own stories, which were often irrelevant to the case. This granted them a tiny symbolic relief, especially as many of them feel unjustly treated. On the other hand, those individuals who came to court as former communist functionaries happened to develop strong feelings of subjugation when, in numerous speech acts, witnesses seemed to hold them responsible for the entire wrongdoings of the communist system. Such an approach to their alleged acts of transgression evoked in them a sense of injustice, degradation and fear. In the situation of the trial, the former security officers intuitively took linguistic measures to distance themselves from the possible responsibility, even if nothing directly pointed to them as being responsible.

The voice of the judge

Focusing on an ethnographic example of a trial, I suggest an approach to law that treats it as an instrument of political influence, holding a potential to generate conceptual categories. Legally generated categories are applied in the course of the social acts of justice, hence working towards the normative defining of the past. Boaventura de Sousa Santos treated law as a system of signs, which, just like a map, represent and distort reality through the application of mechanisms of scaling, projection and symbolization (cited in Merry 1992:358). Talking about law, I propose to distinguish two levels - the production process and the usage of legal acts - in order to discursively and normatively situate a particular guilt. Deriving my approach from Sally Merry's approach to law, I treat a court case as a social situation of high ideological loading, which serves the maintenance of power through the legitimate use of defined categories and semiotic systems in the institutional setting.

The court case material in this chapter is treated according to the rules of ethnopragmatic accounts (Duranti 1994). The ethnopragmatic account combines a linguistic analysis of political texts (as I treat *the Act on the IPN*) with an ethnographic account of a given political situation (as I treat the analyzed court case). The underlying assumption is that the meaning and efficacy of the semantic choices undertaken in the given socio-historical community depend on the ability of the social actors to negotiate, revise and improvise some of the aspects of this political representation (Duranti 1994:37). This example reveals that the opportunities for the security officers to negotiate in this historical and discursive condition are very limited, while the judge and the victims hold a decisive influence over the emergent political representation of the past.

In this part of the chapter, I analyze the acts of the judge as an institutionalized political representation of the dominant discourse concerning the communist past. I approach them as the elements of the process of political authority exercised in the sphere of representation of the past. Using Bakhtin's approach to language, I interpret the judge's utterances as more than a subjective, psychological decision, finding in them an expression of elements of well-established relations between the speakers and listeners present in the court. Hence, in the analysis of the judge's utterances, I recognize such elements as follows: available legal and political construction providing the judge with a language and a logic for carrying out the procedure; the historically conditioned and defined relations of position and role in the courtroom; and a social situation, in which the given political instruments are used by various actors towards their ends.

The historically conditioned institutional and legal solutions delimiting the position of the judge simultaneously provide her/him with instruments of control

over the interactions and linguistic exchanges taking place in the court, as well as over a final representation of those in the form of transcripts and verdicts. Through her/his leadership of the trial and right to the formulation of a sentence, the judge operationalizes the legal acts in relation to the social situation in question. This implementation is always interpretative in nature. The independent court is not able to be politically neutral, as each microsocial act placed in an institutionalized context gains a political potential and is an expression of the structures of power relations in a given locality. The acts of justice, despite the fact that they rely on the same set of acts, produce various political representations. Psychological research points towards the existence of individual differences in the ways people attribute guilt and pass judgements. These differences are dependent on the level of empathy felt towards the particular category of victims as well as on one's own convictions (Wiener et al. 1989). According to this argument, a sentence given by a judge whose relative was severely repressed during communism would be different from one given by a supporter of the liberal historical policy.

Keeping in mind the proposed understanding of the judge's voice, I propose an analysis of the court transcripts created during the trial. The creation of these transcripts should be understood as an articulation of the judge's voice. The transcripts are physically typed up by a secretary present at each court sitting. However, the exact words to be typed into the transcript are dictated by the judge, who paraphrases for the secretary what has just happened in the courtroom. The judge exercises authority over the interpretation and selection of the words, behaviours and emotions of those present in court.

Mary Bucholtz pointed out that the process of transcription is simultaneously an interpretative and representational process. While, on the interpretative level, the question that emerges concerns what to include in the transcript, on the representational level the question is about how to transcribe what was happening (Bucholtz 2000:1441). According to Bucholtz, the transcription process is an act of authorship (Bucholtz 2000:1461). Making transcripts implies shaping their form and content. Such actions are consequential for social reality and people's processes of self-management.

I will move now to two social situations that occurred in the courtroom during Janek's trial. The participants in the exchange are the judge, Sławek (a witness), Tomasz, and the prosecuting lawyer. The fragments, which I reconstruct based on my field notes taken during the trial, are presented to illustrate the process of the emergence of the court transcript and the approach of the judge to the security officers as manifested in the courtroom.

The judge: What can you tell about the style of interrogations?

Sławek: The interrogations greatly varied in style depending on, how we say it – esbeks, and the period of time. That interrogation, which I remember.

The judge: Was it the accused who interrogated?

Sławek: Yes, yes. He first asked me to empty my pockets, he put the gun on the table. What stuck in my memory is an image of a concocted spike with its jaws wide open, which lay on the table. And during the interrogations, the accused turned these jaws towards me, and started to ask about my contacts with the underground, the phone numbers, my occupation […]

The judge: What influence did the gun have on you?

Sławek: Sometimes a man would prefer to get hit in the face, if he deserved it, instead of being psychologically abused this way.

The judge: Did the judge understand well, namely that the turning of a spike and the taking out of a weapon was a form of psychological abuse for you?

Sławek: Yes.

The judge: [the judge paraphrases for the secretary:] 'I treated the turning of the spike and the taking out of a weapon as a psychological abuse'. How many times during the interrogations did the person who interrogated you take out the weapon and put in on the table?

Sławek: I cannot say.

The judge: Meaning you do not remember or others did not do it?

Sławek: They were using rather different methods.

The judge: [the judge paraphrases for the secretary:] Other functionaries did not use such methods.

Sławek: I mean, they were using different methods.

The judge: This is what the judge meant. They did not use this method. And how did you feel, because this is such…

Sławek: After all, the man is frightened.

The judge: This is exactly what the judge wanted to hear […]

[…]

The prosecuting lawyer: Was the accused a well-known functionary, was he talked about?

Sławek: Yes, he was one of the most active ones.

The judge: What do you understand by 'the most active'?

Sławek: I mean that they were talked about more.

The judge: [the judge paraphrases for the secretary:] The accused was more often talked about than other officers. [Then he keeps asking:] And what sort of fame was it?

Sławek: Similar to Colonel Janusz.

The judge: The judge does not know him, so, if you could tell

Sławek: So Colonel Janusz, on Marszałkowska street, in the voivodeship police headquarters, was actively engaged in the interrogations of many oppositional activists, including myself.

The judge: What does it mean actively?

Sławek: It means that he was talked about.

The judge: What does it mean? Did he scream? Did he hit?

The transcripts of this trial hardly ever include the questions posed. They give an impression of a spontaneous narration by a testifying person. From time to time, there is mention of whose question the testifying person is answering, but it is extremely rare for such a question to be registered in the protocol [see for example how the judge paraphrases for the secretary: 'I treated turning of the spike…']. As a consequence, the transcript gives a vague idea about the social dynamics of the court case. The manipulation of the phrasings by the judge is not visible. As seen from the fragments of court exchanges introduced above, the judge, while paraphrasing the exchange, often transforms the meaning of the testimony. To illustrate this point, I chose examples of changes in the protocols, which significantly distort the testimonies and make a significant contribution to the process of construction of the relationship between the evidence and the version of the truth in this particular case. A question posed to the witness is meant to uncover the truth about the exceptional cruelty of the accused. The judge asks for a comparison of the accused with other officers. By paraphrasing the testimony, the judge uses hyperbole. Consequently, the accused is represented as a conscious, distinctively cruel officer with a bad character who stands out from his peer group. The characteristics of the accused are magnified.

Another issue arising from this fragment of transcript is that the judge's mode of leading the court case implies posing questions that suggested particular answers to those who testified [see for example, the fragment starting with the judge's words: 'Meaning you do not remember or others did not do it?...']. Perhaps this kind of behaviour by a judge in a court case implies her/his emotional involvement in the case. The fragment suggests that the judge had a clear inclination about the attribution of guilt throughout the court case and that he was imposing this inclination on other people through his authoritative position. While questioning another security officer, the judge implicitly classified him as an accessory in the process of violation of legal norms. Such behaviour may suggest the judge's certainty regarding the criminal character of the entire institution and the evil character of all the officers. Taking a decision about a par-

ticular guilt, having in mind such an assumption, seems convergent with the legal framework prepared for the handling of this kind of case.

Janek: the imaginative model of remembering

Found guilty of a 'communist crime', Janek was sentenced in an IPN trial to one year and two months' imprisonment. More precisely, he was found guilty, as a 'functionary of the communist state', of conducting interrogations during which he had repeatedly threatened an arrested opposition activist with violence and also insulted him in order to force a confession. The prosecutor and the judge interpreted Janek's alleged behaviour as forms of political repression acted out towards the opposition activist, which formed part of a series of actions taken by the Secret Political Police in that town. The judge described Janek as a conscious agent who had known what sort of state he worked for. Janek did not confess to the crime. Neither did he express regret in his final statement. He does not accept this trial as a symbolic act of justice condemning violations of human rights committed by the communist regime; neither does he deny the existence of such violations. According to him, the prosecution hits out randomly rather than systematically. He sees his trial as a step in the political career of the judge, who enacts the will of the ruling party and, even with insufficient evidence, nonetheless brings about his bad luck.

I met Janek regularly throughout the duration of the trial, working towards a more personal contact based on trust. With time, he presented himself as a politically non-engaged, good officer, dutifully implementing the law, and now a victim of an illogical witch hunt. Very early on in our acquaintance, as if woken up and kept sentient by the trial, Janek told me his family history, already introduced in chapter six. The story of his father and his murderer, who had now been monumentalized, ultimately turned into an overtly repeated refrain compounded by mounting irritants, revealing the sense of injustice felt by Janek.

Most often, when narrating the past, Janek used the language of distantiation from responsibility and guilt, common to the security officers, which also works through the transference of guilt and responsibility to other actors, or to a collective entity such as the institution:

> Our department was an embracing one […] the only official department in which each employee, on each single document, must have put a signature, must have given credentials, must have prepared a report. The operational employees were incognito. When they were attending the investigation officer in a search […] they were nowhere mentioned. This is… well, this is a sort of comfort of theirs. Perhaps they did more evil but since they did not introduce themselves, well […] Meanwhi-

> le, it is the easiest to attack those who did introduce themselves and who signed something.

Such interpretation of the past acts would not have emerged were it not for the new institutional context in which Janek has recently found himself as an accused person. It is not the case that the operational employees made no signature and left no traces in the archive. Janek picks up the situation of 'a search' to build a general statement that extends the rule of anonymity over all the activities of the operational employees. This is one of the techniques used by Janek not only to distance himself but also to assume the identity of a victim. In this part of the chapter, I theorize about Janek's modes of remembering being irritated by the institutional and legal solutions brought about by the post-1989 transformations. The necessity to defend one's raison d'être distorts the modes in which the past is being narrated in the present. In the context of the institutionally-exercised settling of the accounts with the communist past, Janek had almost no opportunity to defend himself. Remaining silent in the courtroom for most of the time, he travelled through the 'elsewhere' speech acts and imagined interpretations of the past events to create the relations of truth and evidence between then and now that would allow him to defend what has been brought into question.

Janek's process of memory-making is random and resourceful since it is affectively dependent on the character of the social situations that provoke it. In the natural setting of a human life, well-established personal schemata for ordering the past may be undermined by accidental social situations or larger political projects. The transmission and re-ordering of the past hold a tremendous potential resulting from seemingly infinite possibilities of forms of social communication. Here, I scrutinize one type of social communication under the influence of which my *villain* lost the coherence of the self and has undertaken a labour of reconstructing his memories. I want to stress the reliance of this reconstructive process on microscopic details of social interactions in which statements are often unfinished and left to be completed in the inner thoughts of the participants. Janek went through an investigation and a trial lasting over two years. He was sentenced to two years of imprisonment, suspended. After an appeal pursued by both sides - the IPN prosecutor and Janek himself, as he decided not to engage a lawyer[122] - the Court of Appeal annulled the previous decision of the court as procedurally faulty.

During one of the hearings, Janek attempted to present the opposition activist Tomasz within the same legal category as he found himself. Jan pointed out

122 As an ex-officer of an investigation unit, he found his knowledge of law sufficient; hence, he gave up the chance to engage a lawyer for the trial.

that Tomasz was a former member of the communist party, and asked the judge to treat him, too, as a functionary of the communist state. Trying to reveal a legal paradox, he argued that a functionary of a communist state could not have committed a communist crime against another such functionary. The judge concurred with the version offered by Tomasz and the prosecutor, which suggested that quitting a high position in the party increased the credibility and merit of the opposition activist. In fact, Tomasz did not explain his motives for this move. His statement on this matter was short; however, he did remark on his suspicion that his retreat from the communist party must have been particularly irritating for Janek, whom he presented as an overzealous communist ideologist. The judge did not ask any questions that might have revealed more details of this metamorphosis, apparently finding no grounds for questioning the legitimacy of the opposition activist's victimhood. Janek read this as political bias by the judge. He started to excavate from his memory more facts confirming the time-serving orientation of the opposition activist. He undertook some archival research and questioned his colleagues in order to fill in the gaps left blank by the exchanges during the hearings. In this way, he built up an image of the opposition activist as an opportunist. Nonetheless, the judge found these moves by Janek unacceptable.

Another of Janek's defence strategies implied that it was Tomasz who had behaved aggressively during the first interrogation. 'He said, I will not talk with the Gestapo', Janek recalled with exasperation, believing he knew why the opposition activist had behaved in this way. He had never thought about this before the trial, but now he slowly reconstructed events with the precision of an investigative officer. He concluded that Tomasz must have been exhausted by the operational officers, who had taken a few hours to prepare him – i.e. to 'soften him up' - before the actual interrogations. Janek tried to present this knowledge by evoking past events while questioning the witnesses. When he asked the opposition activist about such a prelude to his interrogation, the judge overruled the question immediately, saying it lay outside the court's area of interest. Then Janek called an ex-functionary to testify on his behalf, but he only vaguely remembered the incident. In accordance with a distantiation strategy, this man took the chance to underline his own non-involvement rather than discuss the case. For his part, Janek showed understanding for his colleague, although he expressed great disdain for him to me.

There were many such moments during the hearings when the judge blocked Janek's attempts to construct an alternative version of the events, making a direct exchange between the parties impossible. The feelings of subjugation and hopelessness gradually increased Janek's inner need for imaginative reconstructions.

Once, when talking with me after the hearings, he mimicked the judge's words directed to him: 'The time has changed, he said'. I saw in this nothing more than a comment on his ideological engagement. Janek, however, returned to these words a few minutes later during the bus ride to his house. 'Have I told you about that event in the bank, when that woman slapped me in the face and peed on the armchair?' I began to recall a rather nasty story narrated in a bizarre style. Yes, I had heard about a woman who had behaved aggressively towards Janek while he was working as a credit assessor in a bank. 'When the judge said that, it was as if I had heard it before! – The time has changed', he said tersely. Amazed, I tried to follow what would emerge from his reconstructions and associations. I finally learned that he thought the judge and the woman involved may have been mother and son. Consequently, there existed in his mind the possibility of persistently imagining his trial as an extension of somebody's hatred. I realized that the road may have been much longer than the association of these two events when he hinted, while retelling the story about the bank, that he may have interrogated the woman's husband. His style of narrative is very difficult and confusing due to its multivocality. His switching between indirect and direct speech into free indirect speech and reported speech may indicate his affective state, yet it may also point towards his more imaginative style of reporting. He plays the past out in a performative way and, in this performance, he moves into different roles and characters in the play.

> Janek: Well now, well, there was pressure when I started to work in the bank. They were springing up – these obsessed people. I am not sure whether I told you that story – one [woman] hit me in the face: 'why are they employing the ubowiec?' [a colloquial negative way of saying a security officer]. And the boss said that he cared nothing for that, that he knew me as an excellent...
>
> Me: And why did she hit you in the face?
>
> Janek: Well because… hmm… she was one of those credit-takers, but they did not pay back the rates. I was getting the reports, the printout of the missing payments, so the rule was that once the third rate was not paid, I was to be informed. And it was the Skoda I guess… well, I don't know, whether it was some Skoda like Oktawia, or it was called, no, Oktawia was not being produced at that time yet… it was surely 1992, it could have been because I had the office, a room still… well, and, and because out of that [the reports and printouts] it was clear that they had not been paying the rates, so a paper was being sent to call them into the office to explain the reasons, in case they wanted some sort of revision of the rates or perhaps someone had a harsher period of time at that moment, perhaps he/she had some expenditures. My job was to decide on that – to delay something, to allow them to momentarily pay only the interest, or rates or everything… this was what my task was more or less about, plus I was in charge of those teams that were working outside [he means people who were working as bailiffs], plus the whole department of accountancy.

And there was one… I don't have this note but it is filed in the bank's archive, because if I needed it for something… so it happened the way that she came. No, she got the letter calling her in for a talk and I was signing such letters with my last and first names. So, she did not come to my office, but straight to the vice-president of the bank instead – M. was his name. She went to say, yes, she got [the letter], so now I am saying [the vice-president of the bank is saying] 'so go to the chief' [this is how Janek's function was labelled], no she wants here, 'Do you know vice-president, whom you employed? This is ubowiec'. The vice-president says: 'It doesn't bother me, I know where he came from' – he says, 'another year, from scratch' [here he switches into the first person to indicate himself] when I had taken my office, I had firstly organized the security department for them, because the bank had just been established, and later I was organizing the department of vindication. Firstly, the department was constituted by me only, and later I was putting the team together. And this one [by using 'one' to talk about her he expresses his disdain and disgust] was seeing that she was not going to achieve anything. She had even fetched flowers. She had expected that the vice-president would listen to her and say 'yes', so he would throw him [him refers to Janek] out in a second. 'No, I am saying no, I will not thank you, take these flowers with you, there is no need, please go to clean up your files with the chief' [these seem to be the words of vice-president]. And I don't know whether she was walking down a corridor towards my room – after all it was at the other end of it, or she was just running out of this one. I was approaching from the other direction. I did not see the face, I did not recognize who, meaning, I knew what she looked like, and that people are being sent [probably he means from the vice-president's office she would most probably go to his]. And this one stopped in front of me 'yes, yes, yes… and you' [here, he changes the intonation to imitate her hysterical voice] – so furious, and she smacked me in the face on the spot. And she wanted to run away just after that. Oh, and it was at the time when sheepskins were already being worn, it must have been around wintertime. But she did not manage to run away. I caught her by the sleeve, and this sleeve was torn down, but she did not escape… only slightly it was torn. Since she wanted to run away, I stopped her and took her into that room, there were my employees, I'm saying 'guard her here, I will go to the vice-president' I'm saying 'there was such an incident'. I went to the vice-president and I said 'Mr. vice-president, you are not paying me for being smacked in the face'. 'What happened?' I'm saying 'this idiot was at your place' I said 'and she hit me in the corridor'. 'Well, you know, this [this replaces she] is a stupid one, It ['it' also replaces 'she' so as to emphasize and express the disdain] came to ask to fire you, because you know that you were that [that is to indicate his professional past]. 'And what did you answer?' He says 'Mr., Mr. Janek, what are you saying, who… well, I say, you know…', and the vice-president says the following: 'I did not see the smacking itself, I can testify on paper if you would like to sue her in court, I can testify that she came over here, that she was heated and what she requested from me'. I say 'we will see'. I came back to this one, oh, and the vice-president also said 'come back later after you talk to her'. So I came back to the room, and she wants to pee, and I say to one of my men 'go with the lady, but wait in front of the toilet there'. So, she does not want to anymore [indig-

> nantly]. And later she peed on the armchair, because it was made out of fabric. Well, this armchair was wet, it was wet. The sort of old armchairs these were, the wooden hands they had like this… well… So I… I said something to her… and, I say 'perhaps, I will see, I will think whether we will meet in court or not'. Oh no, finally I see… she does not pay. She did not even touch upon the issue of payment and so on. I say 'take from them…' – and this was my right to decide in cases when the three rates were not paid to take away the item for which the loan had been taken. I say to Marek – 'take' I say 'go there in the evening, go there, you have that case, but firstly go here, observe. Somehow' I say 'it seems to me…'. And they did as I said. They say that those [again instead of they or the last name he uses these disdainfully] were packing the luggage into the car, most probably they were going on holiday. And they went out, all the papers were signed, everything, 'there will be no ride, the car [said by his employee in a diminutive, very provocative way] goes to the bank's parking slot'. 'How come no?'. 'No'. They took the car, and this one [about her], I don't know whether she visited the vice-president for the second time or what… in any case, the car and the vice-president later on, I think she visited him, because the vice-president was coming to me. 'Mr. Janek, I am not going to push you, but what do you think, are they going to pay the rates or not? I am not saying… because perhaps you could give them back this car.' 'Mr. vice-president, so give it back to them yourself. You write it and you order to give it back.' 'Oh no' he says 'I didn't come here to' he says 'just like this'. I say 'Mr. vice-president – three rates, interest, if she brings the proof of payment we will give her back the car. She can continue paying back the rates and can get out from here'. And, I am not sure, probably he repeated the same thing, that these did not believe that he has no influence on me – but he did not have. Because I say 'so please, do so yourself'. So, in a matter of four days she paid all three rates, interest and then she got a paper, she went to the parking to pick up the car, she paid for the three days of parking a couple of thousands zlotys… so, like this it was.
>
> So, as I say, this, this sort of unpleasant pressure from… because she foresaw that what, that he fires me, and because 'you know Sir that Jan, he interrogated my husband'. The vice-president asks 'did he beat him?'. 'No, he only interrogated him'. 'Well' he says 'when the case was happening you should have' [.] He saw it was not going in the right direction. [.] This was the vice-president.

Jan's narrative carries a tone of disdain and disgust – indicated through intonation, through linguistic operations (some of them underlined in the transcript), and through the organization of the story. He is the only righteous person in this story. He has rules to obey, he does his job, and he is compromising with nobody. The narrative is very difficult to read because Jan often performs the words of other people without clearly indicating it, and often invents them. I thought, though, that bringing an example of his naturally occurring narrative, in which he tried to link events spread out in time in one logical story, would be informative, as it illustrates his emotional upheavals and is an ethnographic ex-

ample of the minute ways in which he constructs himself and builds order out of chaotically recalled events.

The ambiguous and imaginative character of his story is best illustrated in the last four sentences. He never mentioned that he had interrogated the women's husband except at the very end and in a way that suggested it was completely irrelevant, perhaps an unconscious slip of his imagination regarding a conversation the vice-president had had with the woman. Then, the questions that he is ascribing to the vice-president are like a mirror image of his reservations about the court case in which he is the accused. The plaintiff was consecutively interrogated by Janek and claims to have been abused by him. Other witnesses have confessed that they had heard that Janek was beating and threatening that person with a gun during the interrogations. Janek – whenever we talk about the trial – underlines that the person he had interrogated never confirmed that he had beaten him. These last few phrases appear to be his thoughts on the trial situation but put into the vice-president's mouth and extended to another situation in which he indirectly encounters the ghosts of his interrogations - which he openly represents as a job well-conducted.

However, with the closing of the case in the first instance and the disappearance of the judge from the interactive horizon, this thread was abandoned and Janek never again mentioned this story to me.

I have chosen the above pieces of ethnography to illustrate the ways in which Janek has been reworking what cognitive psychologists call autobiographical memory - that is, the memory responsible for ordering information about the self. Janek's self-constructs became strongly destabilized by the trial, calling for intensive work in the realm of autobiographical memory. Conway (1990) argues that autobiographical memories do not constitute veridical records of experienced events but rather interpretations of events that are partially based on actual occurrences and partially on some form of cognitive integration of events. Neisser (1982) introduced a nested view of autobiographical memory stressing the potential for multiple levels of description of any event. He suggests that such descriptions are highly dependent on the social context in which they are evoked. I argue that the court case experience shaped the modes of memory-making of the accused by inviting many imaginative reconstructions aimed at balancing his impaired public aspect of the self. Such imaginative reconstructions were granted unusual intensity by the indirectness and incompleteness of authoritatively transmitted knowledge concerning the past. This particular experience of the politics of memory allowed the perpetuation of a sense of *victimhood* felt by the alleged *perpetrator*. At the end of the trial, in the second instance, Janek's case was recognized as procedurally faulty. This decision

gave Janek a way of interpreting the entire event as absurd. At the same time, he avoided having to acknowledge his role in the suffering of other people.

The presented observations and analysis of the speech acts uttered by the actors involved in a trial support an argument in which the legal framework of settling the accounts with the communist past as implemented in Poland is described as ambiguous and inconsequential. The haziness of it results from the specificity of the post-communist locality and the dual character of the legal framework, oscillating between the concepts of collective and individual guilt. At the same time, however, the ambiguity is reinforced and perpetuated by the performances of the people involved in the trial, making the outcome of the trial dependent on their ideological inclinations. The processes of (re)construction of personal memory and the self, as well as formation of the current perceptions of the past, to a great extent materialize in response to the instances of implementation of the new normative order. I shall now move on to an analysis of the life narratives - conditioned by the memory project - of two former security officers.

Chapter Nine
Resolving Disorientation through Narrative: two case-studies

> After 50 years, communism brought up a human kind known over there as a security employee. At lower levels, it is indeed a mechanized creature, implemented into an automatic reception of an order and its execution without the slightest contribution on the side of the psychic functions. Uncountable jokes circulate about him.
>
> Leopold Tyrmand *Cywilizacja Komunizmu*

Referring to the gaps in the literature dealing with communism, Paul Hollander noted:

> We have limited knowledge of how the attitudes of the people in the coercive apparatus differed from the attitudes of those in other positions of power. Did they fall back on different rationalizations for their activities? Did they succeed in convincing themselves that the very unpleasantness of the tasks they understood was proof of their dedication and moral rectitude, and, if so, for how long? It is hard to know what proportion of them were idealists and what proportion were attracted primarily by the elite status and the perks of these positions (Hollander 1999:93).

In this chapter, I focus on the ways in which two former security officers rationalize their past involvement in the oppressive institution by narrating their past in the present[123]. Importantly, these are portraits of the security officers who joined the institution after the Stalinist era. Looking at two life stories, I focus on the two men's entry into the institution. I scrutinize the ways in which they came to function in the repressive institution and ways in which they have been rationalizing their jobs. By bringing in extensive passages of their narratives, I make an attempt to understand which aspects of the life-world of a security officer gave them enjoyment, tying them to the occupation. It should not be assumed that all of the security officers were 'blind commies', or that their ideological involvement was a constant[124]. In fact, many of them were not ideologists and, throughout their careers, they went through various stages of involvement and interpretation of the system and their workplace.

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123 Compare a journalistic account *Pajęczyna. Syndrom bezpieki* (Stanisławczyk, Wilczak 2010) gathering security officers' narratives about the communist past.

124 See the work of P. Hollander (1999).

The case of Franek constitutes a portrait of an ideologically involved person. The case of Mirek is a story of ideological non-involvement. They had different social backgrounds. They carried out different kinds of tasks in the 'firm'. Eventually, their modes of disorientation in the current political condition took on very different shapes. I chose to work with only two narratives in order to focus on biographical details and very idiosyncratic shades of enjoyment, interpretation, and distancing from the professional past of the two men.

Ochs and Capps noted that:

> Narrative is born out of such tension in that narrative activity seeks to bridge a self that felt and acted in the past, a self that feels and acts in the present, and an anticipated and hypothetical self that is projected to feel and act in some as yet unrealized moment – any one of which may be alienated for the other (Ochs, Capps 1996:29).

Franek's and Mirek's narratives should be understood as attempts at resolving the tensions and resentments irritated by the transition from communism to democracy. What used to be a desired and well-recognized image of the self during communism has become publicly condemned in the present. The bubble of protection burst all of a sudden. External circumstances and intensive acts of evaluations put the security officers in a position of disorientation, challenging their past self-schemata and undermining the rationale of their construction. The former security officers' engagement in this anthropological project constituted their personal efforts to achieve coherence of the self in time. Ochs and Capps argued that 'silencing is part of the fabric of culture in that it is critical to socializing prevailing ideologies' (1996:33). As with all narratives, the narratives given by the security officers distort the past, silencing some of its aspects. I propose to view this silencing as an integral part of the fabric of contemporary Polish public culture. The strategies of distantiation and rationalizing of their involvement in the workings of the repressive institution constitute a part of the socialization process of the former security officers into the prevailing ideology of purification from the sins of the past regime pushed by the zealots of decommunisation.

The way in which I present the two portraits is meant to faithfully convey their social journeys from full inclusion towards symbolic exclusion. It is also meant to stress the human and *banal* factor of these "demons". I present the cases independently, using extensive quotes, and largely refrain from commenting while presenting their lives and the ways in which they perceive them. I tried to stay as close as possible to the narrative structure of their own representations as well as to their modes of thinking.

Mirek: *Some of the people were laughing at me that I was the only inspector in the region without a bag*

I got in touch with Mirek through another former security officer. In contrast to the others, he did not hesitate and swiftly agreed to meet me. Our meetings lasted long hours and had a stable scenario. I used to collect him and his dog from a street near his house. We drove to the edge of town, where his mother-in-law had an allotment. We sat in the sun on the patio. He talked and gradually got drunk. After a few hours, when his testimony started to disintegrate due to too much alcohol, I suggested driving back home.

Mirek was born in Marianowice in 1950. His father worked as a lathe hand and the most important value he instilled in his sons was to find honest and engaging employment. Mirek's mother was a housewife. Their marriage produced three sons at five-year intervals. Eventually, all three of them became officers of the state security apparatus. As the middle brother, Mirek followed the professional path of the eldest. In turn, the youngest was persuaded to join the services by Mirek. As an officer of the secret services, Mirek worked in three different units. He started in the early 1970s at district level, 'taking care of' a couple of big state enterprises. In 1975, he moved to the voivodeship unit 'T' and worked in a section dealing with bugging. Eventually, in 1985, he was moved to section 3, which dealt with the 'superstructure' and 'took care' of the juridical circles. He was negatively verified in 1990 and was made a pensioner. He worked on the black market both in Poland and abroad during the first years of transition. However, since the 2000s, he has lived on his pension alone, occasionally supporting his wife in her business of selling cheap clothing at various markets in Marianowice. They have no children. They live in a tiny flat in a run-down neighbourhood.

A street kid

Mirek grew up in a working-class neighbourhood on one of the more infamous streets in Marianowice. The majority of his backyard peers became men with criminal records and alcohol problems. He built his narrative to contrast with a male biography typical for his street, presenting himself as a person who had achieved something unaided. At the same time, he ascribed most of his successes to his talent and smartness, as opposed to dull hard work or a well-off and well-networked father. He talked about most of the schools he had attended as well as professional things he had accomplished as if they were very selective,

competitive and prestigious. As he graduated from the technical college, he went on to do his military service. There, he found out about a military academy that trained pilots. He started to fly. One day, he landed without the undercarriage down and suffered concussion. The test results revealed no abnormalities so it was proposed that Mirek continue his pilot training. However, since, for reasons of romance, he wanted to go back to Marianowice, he faked a psychological disturbance, claiming it rendered him incapable of flying, and left the army. Back in Marianowice, his eldest brother suggested that Mirek join the structures of the repressive regime.

> Mirek: If I had gone to the building industry after the army, I could have counted on maximum 1200 zlotych […], here [He means security services], my first salary was 2880 zlotych. […]
>
> Me: Did you know what the job was about?
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> Mirek: No, I had no clue. My brother did not tell me. Since I was a building technician, I was to take care of all of the building enterprises in the district, which were a lot… […] it was called 'looking after' these enterprises. […] It was unit III of the SB, corresponding with department III in the Ministry. After six months of work, well, not quite six… after less than a year of work, I inherited from my brother the remaining ones.

Mirek applied for the job as if it were a regular kind of employment, albeit one that was better paid. He had in mind a sort of life story that would make him distinct from his backyard peers; moreover, as he was planning to get married, he thought a good standard of living would be desirable as, with his wife-to-be, he had thus far been afforded some privacy only during walks. Otherwise, they lived in different one-room flats in which a tiny space was shared with a couple of family members. In Mirek's account, there is no sign of him recognizing the institution as awkward or eerie. 'What repressions?', he often asked. At that time, the crimes of the Stalinist period were over, and the turbulent 1980s had not yet announced themselves; thus, nothing made him question the ethics of his new workplace. The regime was well established and he had no reason to believe it would collapse during the course of his career. In fact, Mirek was not greatly interested in taking a political stand. Today, he defends his institution out of intransigence, in response to the overwhelming demonization of the secret security services of which he was a part. For him it was a workplace like any other.

The "Oldboy"

It was early in his career that he experienced the so-called 'old partisans', i.e. the officers of the UB, well-known for using brutal methods in eliminating the political opposition. This encounter with this 'other' however, is interpreted by him as an indication of the passage of time as opposed to a generic feature of the institutional life he joined – an interpretation fostered by the memory project discourse.

> Our bosses were the former UB people… let's say like my first superior – Lieutenant-Colonel Matiuk – a simple fellow indeed. […] For Colonel Matiuk, there was no problem with acquiring [he means convincing people to cooperate]. We [younger officers] were telling him that the times had changed, people were different, and the standards… for one of the acquiring conversations I brought him a man from Statek - the holder of a university degree, an engineer, a young man, whom I already had in my pocket, he only had to sign a commitment. Yet, since I was a young employee, the boss wanted to be present at that conversation. And his manner of behaviour was… *he sat behind this desk of his* [laughter], tapped the table with his fingers [he taps], he referred to *me as comrade Mireslaw* [mispronouncing Mirek's name – Mirek refers here to his 'uneducated' way of speaking] […] and after this conversation my client withdrew. It was a difference of conduct. The old boy [Colonel Matiuk] used to say that we [younger officers] were too soft, because when it was necessary to acquire a bandit [a form of language used by the UB officers and official propaganda for talking about the partisans who continued to fight the communists after 1945], they put a bag on his head, led him out into the forest, placed a gun next to his head and he had to sign a commitment. Well, I would have most probably signed it too, but we were not in the same conditions.

The 'old boy' in turn wrote, in 1974, in a report concerning Mirek: 'not trained […] He possesses three TW (one acquired with my help) and a few KO. […] His moral conduct - without reservation, which does not mean he is not in need of care and control on the side of the collective. He should also increase the level of self-control. Not a party member, but reveals a crystallized worldview and, in the near future, he intends to apply to join a body of our party candidates[125]', [Source: IPN]. One year later, Colonel Matiuk assessed: 'he currently guides five TW (two acquired with my help) […]. Some progress can be noticed in terms of operational skills, especially reconnaissance, yet, these are still meagre and insufficient in comparison with needs. In everyday work, Mirek faces serious difficulties, like lack of experience and theoretical knowledge. The difficulties accumulate when he is made responsible for carrying out independent tasks.

125 In order to join the party, one first had to apply for candidacy. Time spent as a candidate for party membership could extend up to one year – a common topic of jokes among the officers of the repressive apparatus.

[…] Throughout the time subject to assessment, breakdowns were noticed; Corporal Mirek drank tiny amounts of alcohol. […] As he testified, this was caused by the troubles in his marriage' [Source IPN][126].

In his narrative, Mirek gives a sense of a gap existent between the old boys, whose primary aim was to establish the regime by eliminating the political opposition, and the newcomers of the late 60s and 70s, who were meant to work towards the stabilization and maintenance of the regime. Young officers were treated as green and inexperienced by the old partisans, who developed the ethos of those who had taken part in a real fight. Mirek and other officers of his generation tended to look down on, and distinguish themselves from, the old boys. In his opinion, the first generation of officers was generally viewed by the younger ones as old-school, uneducated and crude. The presence of the old boys called for self-definition by the newcomers in reference to them. First-hand knowledge of the brutal methods applied by the old boys in Stalinist Poland acquired through daily interactions with them as superiors was deepened by the young officers' access to the old operational files, which they discussed amongst themselves. Interestingly, this access did not result in an emphasis being placed on institutionalized brutality and transgressions committed by the old boys but on the fact that a true struggle was going on at that time.

The 1940s and 1950s were perceived by most of the younger officers as a civil war. The notion of civil war, as well as a particular interpretation of oppositional partisans' actions, worked towards the normalization of committed brutalities. They thus managed to externalize the brutal methods commonly associated with the institution itself by ascribing these to the old boys and by seeing the old boys as typical figures of the period, which was seen as a civil war. By this sort of reasoning, they created a possibility of brutal action legitimized and performed by the supervisors, who belonged to a different era, and who happened to use 'different methods'.

> Mirek: In the UB times, various things happened. At that time, it was actually a civil war and it should be approached differently – both sides were like this, and later on… I feel like laughing thinking about those times because… those post-war combatants, let's say – those from NSZ, who are alive… I had a friend, a very good friend in unit C […] and when Sylwek [the aforementioned friend] moved there, they were just preparing documents in terms of doing the microfilm copies […] and they were picking up the files from the 40s and 50s. So, I am saying, and I dare to say that *around 80-70% of these people who are still alive, or have recently died –*

126 These fragments of the superior's opinion shed a little light on the vast amount of control exercised over employees in the state security apparatus. The major spheres of control implied ideological orientation, devotion and efficacy of work, as well as personal life.

> *those well-deserved combatants* [sighed] *they were army's and UB's agents* [said as if this were a scandal and a revelation at the same time]. I saw papers of the people who were sentenced to death and let's say Świerczewski changed their death sentences to life sentences, and then, after 10 years of imprisonment, such a person was released, but after he was sentenced, instead of his name, an alias is registered. I am not taken aback, these were young boys, many of them did not reach their 20s and it is necessary to imagine being in their shoes and indeed – it is either an execution or you cooperate and -
>
> Me: - And in this image which you are calling 'a civil war', would you lean towards the rationale of any of the parties?
>
> Mirek: A very difficult question… this is. No, I would not. I would, I would […] draw a thick line – it was – these were such times.

Defining the 40s and 50s as a civil war is quite common among people who worked as state agents in the numerous branches of the PRL Ministry of Interior Affairs. The two sides in the conflict are being imagined as equally brutal and determined. The fact that the communists eventually managed to use an institutionalized apparatus of repression is perceived as the failure of the opposition to seize power. In Mirek's narrative, the parties in the civil war are also deprived of independence – as one of the sides was supported by the Soviets, and the other was backed by the West – although the West withdrew its support due to an agreement reached with the Soviets at Yalta. Thus, there is a mode of imagining post-war Poland as a field of struggle between two parties: one is pragmatic and follows communist ideals, while the other is naïve, conservative and chooses the wrong political partner. This imagery is further complemented by elevating geopolitics to a position of almost divine forces that determine people's loyalty. An individual such as Mirek had no vision of meaningful oppositional action in the 40s and 50s – these sufferings appeared to him as naivety and lives lost in vain. The breaking down of the oppositionists does not allow the security officers to value them as heroes. If anyone attracted Mirek's respectful gaze, it was the wily colonels from the UB, who won.

Without a bag

Very important for Mirek was a particular ethos of masculinity. The ethos of manhood he believed in implied being unbreakable, self-reliant, intelligent, professional, brave, self-controlled, gallant and independent. His life as a security officer was constructed around these values. He grasped the meaning of his professional life based on a notion of service.

> I think […] that I was a kind of Western professional army officer – this is what they are paying for, somebody trained me into it and this is simply my duty, I do not condescend to anyone.

The sense of duty meant for him an absolute availability and devotion. Yet, this was not a complete adherence to a particular superior or political faction. He thought of himself as a second lieutenant – as indeed he was.

> When a dignitary arrived, some sort of head of state, and protection was needed, then, I am saying, it may have been the Pope, Gorbachev or Kohl, I am saying, all of them were approached in the same way because [.] because we knew that *we were there in order to protect and that was it*.

For Mirek, the notion of service and duty was coupled with political non-engagement.

> And when there was a party gathering, and when there was a 'comrade', because at our place the word 'comrade' was the custom, not 'citizen', so when there was a 'comrade, how is it with the party?', I was saying that 'I, comrades', oh, because most of them were asking why didn't I sign up'… 'you can sign up for a rosary, here you can join, and in order to join I need a consciousness, and I think that I am not keen enough for a party membership, that I still do not understand, that these ideas are too majestic for me'. They had no hook on me – I did not say anything wrong…

Since the state security apparatus had the aim of obtaining nearly 100% party membership, stories about avoiding membership or becoming a member unwillingly have been frequently invoked by the lower-ranking officers. They are usually tinged with irony. Being able to avoid party membership became an almost heroic deed. Mirek talked about his non-membership in order to legitimate his 'service-like' attitude, as well as to create a further distinction between himself and the others. He does not distance himself from the institution itself, or from the idea of secret security services or even from socialism or communism. He is critical, however, about certain attitudes and ways of conduct that were present in the past. Similarly to the ways in which he spoke about the old boys, he differentiated other categories of state agents that he disliked. Naturally, he placed himself in opposition to the despised features of other characters he passed in the corridors of 'the firm' daily and nightly when necessary.

> There was a group of people – *typical lickspittles* [with disgust]. There was a group who did not realize they were on duty, but thought they had a regular post. […] There were people who were busy with their own interests, because if you had wanted, you could have had a lot of time, right. The operational positions were about being as little as possible at the office and as much as possible in the area – in the enterprises which we took care of, working with agents – and some of the people did that, while some – there were people like that – had pieces of land, they were building up at that time, there were those who went to collect fruit if it was the season.

He talks extensively about concrete examples of people who displayed the wrong sort of attitude to the service. While describing greedy types, he recalls his official visits to greenhouses. On one such occasion, a local party secretary accompanied him. When the opportunity arose, the local dignitary packed as many cucumbers as possible into his suitcase.

> And I did not have a bag. Some of the people were laughing because I was the only inspector in the region without a bag. Well, I did not have any bag, *anyhow, I would not take, damn! This is not my way* [said with an emphasis indicating honesty and distance from other sorts of behaviour].

Another time he told about a black Volga's visits to a factory that he took care of. The arrival of the black Volga meant that, for whatever reason, some dignitaries were packing the car with the goods produced in that very enterprise. Still, Mirek had called the old boy – Colonel Matiuk - and had reported the incident. Talking to me, he imitated the old boy's answer with disdain, ridiculing him: '*let through Mirek, let through, these are the party secretaries, let through*' [said imitating the voice, which was made to sound ridiculous and funny]. So he let them through that day, but the image of the black Volga stayed in his mind and, when I asked him about the PRL, he stated briefly, 'it was the Poland of cronies', meaning that a very small group of people had 'made a pile' in that era. On the other hand, 'there was a sense of security and stability – both in terms of work and in terms of safety'; he followed up this statement almost immediately, 'and the average was different' – meaning more equal. He felt that he had guarded that security, providing society with a sense of stability.

Just as he had no bag, he also had no friends in high positions.

> These sorts of people were numerous. Simply, a father was pulling a son. Because, if I was an outsider in the firm, *who was to support me?* [said with a sense of injustice] If a father was a colonel, working as a chief of the unit – this facilitated promotion.

It was because of the colonel's son that Mirek had to leave his beloved unit T and move back to unit III, taking care of lawyers. Eventually, he says, in contrast to most other units, unit T had been mostly positively verified in 1990.

The last category of functionaries of whom Mirek disapproved consisted of those who, similarly to Colonel Matiuk, lacked intelligence. Jokes and stories concerning such, mostly young (perhaps a mark of another generational change), officers are common among the state agents. If one lacks one's own sense of things, one's own judgement tends to discredit. Mirek repeatedly told me the story of a man who was asked to divide a pile of 33 illegal leaflets, sending half to the Ministry and leaving the other half in the Marianowice archives. The guy had a hard nut to crack as, each time he tried to create two piles, there was always one leaflet left and he could not figure out what to do with it. Mirek was

different – he was independent and whenever he was given an order that was dim and possible to omit, he would ignore it. He learned this from his partner (newcomers always joined a more experienced officer in order to learn the applied knowledge faster), whom he respected for his 'soundness'. Instances of this soundness are often recalled by the officers as they deepened the distance between themselves and the party or their superiors, whom they often depict as ridiculous or wrong.

> These were the last years – I did not like, as I say, I had to be convinced that what I was doing had sense, had an aim, and these last years [the late 1980s] looked like that – there arrived a message from Warsaw and everyone wanted to be holier-than-thou and to have results, so they were driving us away into that main square, I do not understand to what purpose, since if they had not sent us there, the people would have perished themselves anyhow… so, on such occasions, I did not go there. I had a mate in the subway between Krakowska and Chopina Street - there was a small souvenir shop in the subway. Karol was 'officiating' there. So when we were ordered for protection of the main square […] we were sitting together with Karol in the undercut – which was strategically situated, the station was on, so, I knew what was going on in the square, I knew what was going on at the university. In between a couple of snifters, I was reporting what was going on at the square [without seeing it], saying how many people were walking in the demonstration. Everybody was satisfied – so was I.

It was in the 1980s that Mirek started to find himself at a crossroads from time to time. The above story tells about orders, nonsensical according to him, to send officers of the repressive apparatus to control demonstrations and display to the people the power of the shaken regime. He did not think it was what he should have been doing – facing the crowds. He was a *secret* security agent, not a public one. Besides, these orders from his supervisor were considered ill-advised.

The *Solidarity* movement intensified in the 1980s and this growth was coupled with an escalation in the tasks assigned to unit T. Here, again, Mirek felt more unease, when the planting of bugs became very popular.

> I had [moral unease] in regard to the bug installation itself… when it started to mushroom and reached a large scale. I mean here mainly the flats belonging to the opposition. […] it went all the way and in many cases, it was, in my opinion *it was not, it was not justified* [said with disgust]. […] I did not find it reasonable because the opposition was sussed out fairly well with operational methods, thanks to OZIs [Osobowe Źródła Informacji – all sorts of agents who provided information]. *You do not realize who and on what sort of top levels…!* [as if talking about a deep secret that was shocking] No technology. Technology can only confirm something, but no technology can replace a well-situated agent. It cannot replace it, because a device can register what we are talking about, but you cannot set it to ask a question, or to provoke a situation, to do something. So, it should not have happened, in my opini-

> on, being extravagant with technology. […] it was a sort of entering into people's lives, into their very private matters, very intimate, and this was not needed.

Mirek felt things had spiralled out of control in the late 1980s. He was calm though, as he perceived himself as completely distinct from those at the top, the ones who gave orders and obtained benefits. Stories about medals given to superiors who never left their offices, for jobs done by regular officers, are common. For him, these signified a 'Poland of cronies' and deepened the distance between the greedy superiors and himself – a regular officer on duty who kept his dignity.

> There was one such job in Marianowice, it does not matter what building, as I said before, *there are things which I will not say* [conveying a sense of secrecy and professionalism] […] and I got a silver order of merit for it, and there were two of us working in that building – one guy from Warsaw camouflaged, and I was joining him at nights only, and my superior – Tadeusz Maron – A SLOUCH, he got for it a so-called 'porcelain' [one of the highest medals]. Basically for sitting and drinking vodka and doing nothing. He stayed in the outreach of the radio station. That's all. And I was coming back with a bleeding forehead. For that job, also a vice-chief got…

A job done well brought Mirek no real favours at that time. He understood hierarchy, and even though he disliked it, he focused on his job.

Like many officers, he made sure that one more gate was open to him – the gate of help. Helping others is a recurrent theme in the former officers' narratives. Stories of using one's privileged position to get people out of trouble always featured during the interviews. These stories pop up every now and then in order to counteract the public narrative that demonizes the secret security services, and to show an underside, which is silenced. In those times, these were simple favours – acts of reciprocity or signifying practices of fraternity, some of them forced – since people asked for help, imagining a regular officer to be omnipotent. Mirek's examples of helping were stories of rescuing some of his old backyard peers from awkward situations. These rescue operations were always staged in a spectacular manner, the logic of which relied on Mirek's cynical and insolent abuse of power, situating him at a distance from the security structures. This power was made real through people's slavishness acted out whenever an ID or the word 'SB' appeared.

> Mirek: I helped a couple of people. […] On my backyard, there was a guy, my peer, he is dead – a very good football player – Mark Smolar, only he took to drink. He was a painter.
>
> Me: An artist?
>
> Mirek: *A decorator* [laughing]. So, once I gave him a summons because he had a hitch at work, because he did not go to work – they called him […] so I wrote him

down, that as a witness I called him into for such and such case […] and it was accepted. Yet, after some time, his mate came over, also a great fellow, and he said 'damn! They are going to fire Mark, because today, it is the third day that he is not at work'. So, what sort of business is that for me? To help some fellow from my street… yet, whom I did not keep in touch with, but we knew each other, we were from the same street. I called. It was a sort of cooperative. 'With the director please'. I said on the phone who I was and that I would pay him a visit shortly. I took a new Volga – we got the new one, black. I told someone to drive me in there, and that was a flurry, because a barrack like that, and there comes a car like this, *a spiel*. The director is standing in the doorway '*good morning Mr inspector!*' [somewhat with disdain]. I am saying 'Mr director, there is a business. Smolar was at our place. We are keeping him in and we are going to keep him still today. He is not guilty, but he is knowledgeable about people whom we are planning to suss out. So, he is not going to be at work still today. I did not ask. *I was simply saying* [said as if he disapproved of the director's behaviour]. Fine, Mr inspector, whatever. I said 'Do not make any sort of fuss about it at work'. 'Of course, anything'.

Enjoyment

'Taking care' of other people in the industry, often referred to by Mirek as 'playing around', was not the kind of job that he fancied. The real work started when the Ministry was reorganized and he was moved to the voivodeship level to unit 'T'[127]. During our meetings, the moments when I could always observe his engagement and pleasure of recalling and talking were when he spoke about his bugging jobs. His attention to the tiny details of such jobs and the pet names used for the bugging equipment, uttered in an affectionate manner, worked as signifiers of the enjoyment he had derived from doing his work.

In unit T, there were sections [he means the voivodeship level], in the department there were units [he means the level of ministry]. Like in our unit, section 1 was responsible for the installations. There were two sections for the listening-in – PP [bugging] and PT [tapping], there was a photography section and one for clandestine entries – […], and there was a section for the equipment maintenance. […] And I was working there [in section 1 of unit T] for many years. Because it happened that, as a young employee of this section, I was at one 'job' [*robota*] – that is what we called it, it was a big work, let's say a hotel-type of job meaning that many rooms were bugged – you can read about it in books, it is not a sort of… [estimating how much he can say]. […] And I went for one job like this with our boys [he means colleagues from Marianowice unit T] and I did quite well and when the request was sent from Warsaw, because it happened from time to time, they needed employees for some sort of a grand job, simply the manpower in Warsaw did not suffice, so they collected people from other regions. So, I went. I was living very nicely in

127 "T" as in tapping.

> Warsaw, in the Bristol hotel, it looked different from how it is now […] *out of those big Warsaw hotels I know practically all* [proudly]. […] And I came back from there with a very good reputation.

Mirek enjoyed placing bugs in various places because it was the kind of job that required technical skills, good ideas, reflexes and flair – the sort of things he valued highly. The jobs he was doing were often demanding and challenging. Thus, he felt satisfaction after doing them well. There was no hint of crude ideological work in what he was doing. Once he had graduated to the top team responsible for installations, he worked on the big espionage cases. His sort of job, directed against people from other secret services, implied no questions of morality for Mirek. Instead, there was a feeling of satisfaction from performing a demanding task in conditions of high risk, sometimes physically hard, which required some very well-synchronized teamwork. He enjoyed being a part of a team. And the technical team was of a particular sort, according to Mirek's perception.

> The technical unit – the department could not have been hired by any police officer or any SB employee, because this is what occurred to him, because he had some problems with a client or for clearing up the case… so the technology guys would come, place the ear [colloquial for a bug] and all would be fine.

The technology peers entered the picture when important cases were being pursued. In terms of backing up the police, this included murders and financial offences or white-collar crimes involving large sums of money. Meanwhile, the support for the state security apparatus was much wider, but was most commonly used by the espionage and counter-espionage units. The Secretary of State was empowered to approve the installation of a bug. Setting a bug and using material sourced from bugging required ingenuity and good intuition. While other officers played games with real people, Mirek was dealing with particular sorts of toys inserted into and removed from various Polish walls. He moved around Poland a lot. Being called to various different places, he participated in jobs that he was unable to discuss with colleagues from Marianowice or, indeed, with anyone. This surely added to his local prestige as a specialist, who was being assigned to difficult jobs by Warsaw. Eventually, his business trips involved more than perfected technical skills. He had to switch identities, to be someone else, to be two different people at the same time. Of such unusual experiences, he talks with great pleasure. These jobs elevated him above the casual and mediocre level of the Marianowice apparatus of repression. The mist of secrecy has surely worked towards the aggrandizement of his involvements committed in the sphere of professional life.

Mirek could not recall any sort of event, throughout his years of service, that could be read as an expression of disapproval at what he was doing. When he was 'taking care' of people, they were usually overzealous and submissive towards him. When he dealt with 'ears', he only installed them; he did not listen through them. Today, he continually recalls those difficult jobs that were particularly challenging. Such recollections are always coupled with pleasant affective states.

> You know, to install, because it is mainly about passing, making an opening, so later it could, because the rest is just cosmetics – so it [the opening] could have taken a while, like, taking a decision what [tool] to use now, how, what do you see, how is it in there… and these sort of things could have taxed one's brain, some of them perhaps still do today.

This detailing of his technical work, talking about 'ears' and 'idiots', was probably, for him, the only enjoyable aspect of our conversations. He was 'the only one' in Marianowice who installed so many 'idiots'. And there were a few of them in Poland – but I should not have written about that. Apart from delight though, there is a resentfulness in Mirek. It was not an easy way of earning his daily bread, as he spent many hours in drains setting cables. You can read hard work in his hands.

The letter

It is our third meeting. Mirek is searching for something in his bag. As usual, the bag contains a bottle of cheap Hungarian wine and three bottles of dark Polish beer. The search sounds familiar; this time, however, apart from the bottle of wine with which Mirek starts his manly conversations, he takes out a well-worn piece of paper.

> Mirek: Here is a letter of a sort that I found. Not everybody got it. This is a sort of recap of my work. […] It says in what unit, how long, at what positions […].
>
> Me: Did you ask for it?
>
> Mirek: No, it was without asking, but as I am saying, not everybody got it, because not everybody worked this way, because here there are the imminent dangers, it was not applicable to everybody…

The letter open in my hands was the tangible sign of gratitude Mirek received from the state. However, this letter was worth nothing. A well-worn piece of paper written on a typewriter listed his work experience and health problems caused by his professional involvement. Nevertheless, Mirek held on to it, as it proved all that he had told me.

Mirek's resentment at the transition emerges only occasionally. Like many officers in the secret political police, he was sure he would remain in the service. Verified negatively, he did not even appeal against the decision of the invisible Commission.

> You know, I regret that things worked out this way. *I very much liked*… you asked about prestige before, could you specify?

> When the UOP came into power, they were strolling through corridors with guns and from around the corners they were shooting into each other – puf, puf… - meaning they did not shoot for real, they were only playing around because they had guns in their hands. I was taught that a secret service officer takes out a gun only when he is ready to use it – that's it – just like a samurai and his sword. To impress somebody with something? That something hangs under your armpit…

Mirek feels humiliated by the way in which the transition occurred. He had thought of himself as a politically non-involved specialist. The unprofessional acts of the newcomers were embarrassing for him.

> Why are we like this about Russia? Why are KGB and GRU reproached? Where were they [the UB/SB generals] to be educated at that time? In our times, the vice-chief Alek Olenty – I am saying like this, he graduated from an academy in Moscow, a SQUIRT, a vice-chief of OKAP, a SQUIRT, he had no clue about the operational work, a SQUIRT. He left and he became a chief of security in a bank. *What did he do in his life and what did I do*?

Mirek receives a pension of 1100 PLN per month. The average pension for 2008 is 1397 PLN. He switches on a radio or a TV or opens a newspaper and he hears about former officers of the state security apparatus who, even though they were bloody bastards repressing the political opposition who led the country towards democracy, are taking enormous pensions of about 6000 PLN. Moreover, he knows of many of his former superiors, who were blind ideologists, or who followed the ideology blindly for gain, taking secure positions in financial institutions, or founding their own companies.

Mirek is an honourable failure today. After hid verification, he did a couple of jobs on the black market, working for some shady fellows whom he met through his ex-colleagues and who probably used to work as their informers in the past. These were all technical jobs for which he was well trained. The network was cut off at some point, though, and he sat at home with his books. He heard this or that discussed publicly about 'the firm', 'the factory' for which he used to work.

> You see, I want to say that not all of the officers in this service are or were like this [in a defensive tone], the way I am saying, as if, oh… to represent them to the public

> opinion, that they are bloodthirsty, just like not all of them were like the one whom I talked about, even though these were particularly numerous, that they would take a kilo of cucumbers or tomatoes, because they were free. For sure many, many… and that's why I do not keep in touch with my ex-colleagues. According to this rule, they are well off at the moment.

Franek: *And I felt, and I still feel… all the time, that my work was essential*

I obtained Franek's contact details through another former security officer. At his suggestion, we met in his office after working hours in order to enjoy the privacy required for the sort of conversations I wanted to have. Franek run a detective agency situated in a former printing-house building. The space itself was a bit murky. It had some socialist-era armchairs and a low, longish, rectangular table, two black desks of a more modern style and stands filled with file binders. Next to a calendar with a naked young woman hung a series of kitsch landscapes in pastel colours – Franek's attempt at softening the milieu of the office. On the other wall were an emblem and a hanging bust of Marshal Piłsudski - Franek's ironic commentary on the political reality.

Towards becoming a communist

Franek was born after WW2 in a small Polish town in what he calls an 'intelligentsia' family. Talking about them, he found it important to underline the mixed political and religious convictions present in the family.

> On my mother's side it goes like this: brothers, grandpa linked to BCh partisanship. Mother's brothers – one in BCh, the other in AL [communist formation]. The youngest brother did not catch hold since he was too young, so, neither a partisan nor nothing. This is on my mum's side. On the side of my father's family – wrong [said in troubled voice]. Father's oldest brother – AK [anti-communist formation] [he smacks] […] chased after war by the way [he smacks] but he did not have the sort of problems *sensu stricto*, he was not arrested, but he was constantly reproached with things. In turn, the other of father's brothers - in Zośka battalion, died during the Warsaw Uprising and the entire family, the entire family, because later on I obviously did talk about these issues – so it was more AK, AK… I am talking about it because these options [political] of my family were slightly divided. But, but in my family, perhaps it was this sort of time. I now regret that, in my family, these issues were very rarely, modestly, talked about.

He then went on to complain that any sorts of conversation that took place within the family on these issues were generalities. He underlined that he himself had had no wish to deepen this knowledge and that he had grown up with typical PRL books – 'Meaning neither Katyń nor others, nothing. Just admiring, obviously, Red Army…'. Through his narrative, he repeatedly expressed resentment at his family, his university teachers, and the party for not educating him about the atrocities committed by the regime for which he worked.

In his story, Franek placed himself at the margins of the family, often in opposition to his parents. Starting with the political affiliations present on his father's side of the family, he then moved on to his parents' strong adherence to the Catholic Church, from which he broke away. As a teenager, he was drawn into the Association of Atheists and Freethinkers.

In general, Franek introduced himself as a *flaneur*, an artistic and frivolous type, a crafty fellow, who liked to have fun. He dreamed of getting into film school and becoming a film director but he failed the entrance exams. After that, he tried studying Economy and Political Science without much success. Meanwhile, he worked for a railway company but soon quit as it did not fulfil his ambitions, and he became politically engaged in the workings of the Rural Youth Union (*Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej,* ZMW), where he boosted his ego and found a venue in which he was able to feel very self-confident.

> There I become a vice-president of the regional board and I entered the party. All the time […] I was a non-believer. I joined the party in 1968. I substantiated my membership application by pointing at my disdain towards the March events [famous student and intellectuals' anti-government protests], meaning I identified with the authorities at that time and so on and so on. I was obviously being perceived as a sort of ideologically-devoted acquisition in the PZPR.

For the first time, Franek enjoyed the prospect of omnipotence when he joined the Association of Rural Youth.

> ZWM? Honestly? It was great fun! First as an ideology instructor of a district I was recruiting new members for the organization […]. I surely have a great aptitude for this, because a lot of youth entered the association. I was travelling around as a so-called – just like in the aftermath of war - ideologue [laughing], like this I was travelling around those villages and I was making appeals to the youth and building up the organizational structure. And I was being perceived very well. I had plenty of girls, whom I knew very well how to buy, I was skilful in buying them, you see, with my speeches.

After the ZMW episode, Franek approached the university once more, again unsuccessfully. He thus once again found himself captured in a moment of high expectations incommensurate with the reality of his abilities or engagements. Fortunately, there came a helping hand from the family. The husband of

Franek's sister, a sociologist, had been enlisted by the secret political police and had made a career there.

> And when I was kicked out from the Faculty of Political Science, then, what to do with such a great brother-in-law – Franek [said in the diminutive], right? So they drew Franek [in diminutive] down to Marianowice and this is how I got into the secret political police. With a couple of credit books in hand […] it was possible for me to finish my studies in Marianowice at the local university, this time in an extramural program, as an employee of the apparatus.

Franek started his job in the state security apparatus as a low-ranking officer in the auxiliary unit, which dealt with such tasks as following people, taking photographs, often in disguise, on staircases, in cars, observing and collecting the information that the higher-ranking officers asked for. The job did not require particular qualifications, and Franek eventually reached a stage when he felt he should have been doing something more noteworthy. Moreover, he was working under cover; therefore, not being able to divulge his affiliation interfered with his sociable lifestyle. He knew too many people in Marianowice and telling lies was becoming difficult. He thus insisted on his brother-in-law arranging his promotion to an official position in 'the firm'.

> […] it is 1982, the beginning, so, just after the announcement of martial law. I do not remember, but it must have been March, so the martial law goes on, right [...] I get to the least popular unit in which I stay till the end, it is a unit – I do not know, well, how you will use it… it is the unit number three […] which dealt with the entire superstructure, so everything was there […]. And from the very first day, I get to the section that deals with universities. […] And I get one particular university, the staff; the entire staff.

Franek now occupied the position previously held by his brother-in-law, who had moved higher up the secret political police ladder. The job in unit three gave him wings[128].

128 It is important to stress at this point the diversity of the occupational structure of the state security apparatus. Specificity of a unit or a section has been particularly relevant for developing particular modes of comportment and social behaviour. It moreover resulted in different strategies of justification being applied by employees of different units in today's condition of public disclosure and reprobation. In the case of Franek, it was the fact of dealing with the intelligentsia, often in the form of casual conversations or amicable interactions, that played a significant role.

Inferiority complex

It seemed strange to me that Franek chose to open our first long conversation with issues such as the Katyń lie. I later realized this was an expression of his regret at not knowing about it. Later in the conversation, he said:

> Franek: […] I regret I did not have this knowledge, because, most probably, it would not change my consciousness, option and my views in general concerning all of that, but the knowledge would have been useful.
>
> Me: What for?
>
> Franek: Because you know, […] I do not know whether I will explain it well to you. I often faced the necessity of having conversations concerning, including other things, topics like: Piłsudski, Polish-Soviet war… or Russian, whatever you want to call it – I should have had a knowledge that is objective, and not just one-sided as represented by the option which was at that time [during communism]. […] Until the very end of my job, my approach was very ideological and non-critical. […] I could have led some of the conversations differently – do you understand? And in this way… this is how I see it now, that it seemed as if I was a… how was it called… as in old times – a Stalinist, and I would perceive myself as the kind who had blinkers – only PRL and so on and so on…

This was an unexpected turn in our conversation. I was waiting for a more trivial story, even if constructed for display only, of at least partial condemnation of things like the 'Katyń lie', as it is commonly called now, for being an inhuman atrocity. Franek, nonetheless, criticised his own lack of knowledge about the 'Katyń lie' on different grounds. He described it as a problem concerning his competency as an officer. He blamed the family, authorities and professors for withholding information that, according to him, was necessary to perform his job in a professional manner. He brings in an image of the old boys, whom, as an officer belonging to the second generation, he does not want to resemble. It is crucial to him to differentiate himself as a professional, esteemed for his knowledge. He also sought to appear a bit of an intellectual type[129]. Coming from an intelligentsia family and having a sister who was a successful academic,

129 Among the security officers I talked to, an ethos of intelligentsia seems to be overtly present; this enduring effect of traditionally hierarchical Polish society, which the communist project aimed at revolutionizing, had its ambiguous consequences. Often, people recruited to the repressive apparatus were born into peasants' or workers' families and moved from small backward villages to the socialist cities. Many had the chance to earn a higher degree through the venue of professional affiliation. Work in the state security apparatus was a way of social promotion. The sense of superiority was caused not only by the financial and material wellbeing - typical for the entire communist state sector - and by the reputation of being all-powerful, but also through the access to education and a sense of professionalism.

Franek, with his numerous university failures, developed an inferiority complex. Getting into unit three seemed to him an opportunity to enter a social milieu he admired and to master the sort of social skills he found worthy. The work he had to perform gave him the grounds for distinguishing himself from other officers, who seemed rougher, uneducated, and plain.

Franek arrived in a unit that preoccupied itself with superstructure. His job was to 'take care' of the staff of a particular university. This was an ambitious task, a challenge as much for him as for many of his co-workers. They had to face an image of intelligentsia that put them down, annoyed them with its superiority, and from time to time played that superiority out. This complex is particularly visible when Franek talks about his lack of objective historical knowledge and his blind devotion to communist ideology. He feels anxiety when he imagines what the staff of the university he 'took care of' might have thought of him. How had he appeared to them? He becomes uneasy thinking about his lack of competence. He imagines he should have known about certain historical details, as he would have said things differently in the conversations he held doing his job. This is *post factum* thinking about certain past situations in which he felt he was dominating but which he now imagines may have made him look naive. In a sense, he sees through the mist to realize that he may have been merely a tool; however, this is not a strong image, and it is overpowered by the fulfilment and enjoyment he derived from his work and the person he was at the time.

There was a power

> And if you asked me whether I had regretted getting into the department […] I would definitely answer 'no'.

Franek liked his job because it enabled him to be 'someone'. It allowed him to acquire prestige, which he had always sought but had failed to gain in other ways. He recognizes that this prestige was largely based on fear. However, this did not diminish his enjoyment of it. He knew the element of fear was present but behaved as though it were absent. Gallant and sophisticated, he liked to behave thoughtfully. He detested those officers who had shown their hands.

> Franek: None of the people, my family members, friends, acquaintances would have allowed themselves to say something negative about me being there. It is not sure whether they were afraid. They were afraid because, it is like this, I want you to know, the secret political police was perceived, and anyhow, anyhow this is how it was, that police [he smacks], they were as if, they could have envied us, but they ne-

ver stood against, you know. So, I am thinking that it was rather fear […] it was not said. It was not said.

Me: And was it felt?

Franek: I tell you, for instance, that, because I got married to a colleague from my unit, and it was 1975 and I was so unlucky, because her parents were pressing for this marriage so much to take place […]. So, for my friends in Mientok, where I lived, I organized a sort of homey wedding party… with invitations […] and very many of my friends came to this party – from school and from other places. […]. And there a clash happened. Under the influence of vodka, under the influence of this… Well, one of my colleagues could not resist himself, and he was also an employee [of the secret security services], just like me [.] and he kicked off a row. […] This and that took place so we had to handcuff him, and what – disarm, because there was a gun and so on.

Me: What was the clash about?

Franek: Under the influence of vodka [said in the diminutive] he said: 'I know about you! A lot! Here, I know about you, and about you, and I will…' [he smacks]. This is the sort of thing I later on tried to weed out […] – the lower someone was located in terms of possibilities and rank, the more he wanted to show off, and these were the sort of very negative, very negative aspects.

And here you have an answer to your question, that the position of this institution was so strong that even if someone was thinking differently, he did not say it. […]

Me: But when you say prestige… to my mind, it is something positive…

Franek: Well, perhaps it is the wrong word that I used… but yes, prestige, it was the kind of prestige that – perhaps it was not a prestige – you were towering over other people. […] perhaps I should not speak about the prestige of power, but there was a power.

Franek talks with pleasure about the prestige of the institution for which he worked. Only momentarily did he take up my suggestion that what he talked about was perhaps not entirely positive after all. This caused him a few doubts, but, with successive statements, he returned to his initial feeling about the prestige, which was enjoyable for him. He sees nothing wrong in fear constituting the basis for his feeling of superiority. Yet, a difference should be stressed about the process of the production of fear. In his narrative, he condemns a situation in which power is being abused. Now, his definition of the abuse of power is particular. It involves stripping oneself of the disguise and the lack of emotional, elegant playfulness in the situation in which one is clearly dominating. One abuses when one directly shows one's affiliation and exposes it in an unsophisticated manner - when one makes people fear in a crude way.

The university staff – you know, despite all, they were people up to the mark. And for instance [he smacks] I think one had to be really well prepared, at least this is

> what I think, for such a conversation – not only in terms of arguments [he smacks] but also in terms of manners […]. This is how I imagined that. But, for instance, not all of us did… […]

Another of his stories illustrates the peculiar way in which he defines transgression. During one of our conversations, I asked him to tell me about something difficult or weird that happened to him at work. He asked me to switch off the recorder and spoke about a situation that I want to bring in here because it complements the other story. After the voice recorder had been switched off, Franek talked about a good friend of his who, from time to time, lent him the key to his flat, so that Franek could sleep over. One day Franek opened the apartment, went in, and could not believe his eyes. In the living room there were piles of 'bibuła' [illegal propaganda publications]. 'Fuck! What to do?'. Sober in his thinking and full of good will to 'save his friend's ass' but at the same time remaining loyal to his professional code, he rang a colleague (another 'employee') and explained the situation to him. They took the 'bibuła' away and, on Franek's initiative, decided to give a lesson to the man who had sorely tested Franek's friendship. Franek set up a meeting with the 'bibuła' guy at a school playground. When the guy arrived, Franek and his colleague played out the following scenario: Franek, not anticipating what he might find, enters the flat of the 'bibuła guy' with his colleague. There, in the living room, the colleague sees the 'bibuła' and is shaken. He insists on turning the 'bibuła' guy in to 'the firm'. Franek tries to convince him not to. They discuss the matter. Eventually, Franek persuades his colleague to meet the 'bibuła' guy and just give him a sort of warning lecture to see what his reaction might be. So, the 'bibuła' guy turned up at the playground, and Franek acted as though he was powerless to change the course of events… if only he had been alone when entering the flat, everything would have been different. Now, all he could do was to ask his colleague not to give the 'bibuła' guy up to 'the firm' immediately but to meet with him first. Coincidentally, the 'bibuła' guy was planning to leave the country and join his son abroad. He had been waiting for this departure for a long time for deeply emotional reasons. Franek knew about it, and he used this personal information with all the skilfulness of the security officer. 'Are you fucking crazy? Now that you are to see your son – you waited for it so long? What, for this sort of shit? What can I do with it now?' The superbly staged conversation continued. Eventually, Franek engineered a delay in the 'bibuła' guy's departure but, nevertheless, did not give him up to 'the firm', so the consequences were not as severe as they might have been. Franek presented this story as though it were an instance of his decency and a favour for a friend. He had been unable to simply ignore the matter because he believed that 'bibuła' were politically dangerous objects that could

have weakened the system he was supposed to defend. The repercussions of turning a blind eye might have been serious – for both him and his friend.

The meeting he set up might serve as an example of the way in which he imagines a performance of professionalism – a casual conversation in which threats are made in a 'polite' and veiled manner but seem friendly nonetheless. He needed to position himself as the 'good cop' and have his colleague play the 'bad cop'. It would not have sufficed simply to talk to the 'bibuła' guy himself, nor to let the whole thing go. In most of his official situations with informants and clients, he played the part of the good cop, actually believing at the same time that this was his true identity. The word he used for that sort of intervention while talking about other, similar situations was 'neutralizing'. He perceived his way of 'neutralizing' people to be correct, because it relied on a 'dialogue'. He felt good in it, because his position in that 'dialogue' situation was almost always superior.

Networks

The methods Franek was using made the drawing of a clear line between his job and his private life unworkable. When asked about his circle of friends while working in the state security apparatus, he said that the spectrum was wide and, among a few other categories, he mentioned 'university friendships' – which meant the contacts derived from his job. When asked about the ways in which this changed after he left the secret security apparatus, he said that the 'university friends' simply melted away. This made me think that he did not actually perform the sort of common separation between professional and private life. Apparently, there was an aspect of his profession that felt to him like leisure time, especially when he had an informant who was a lover at the same time or when he was regularly invited for vodka by some of the academics and felt as though a sense of friendship was taking shape. Since Franek still lives and works in Marianowice, in the post-1989 situation he is likely to meet his 'university friends' every now and then.

> […] still now, I have colleagues, acquaintances, because friends, I would rather not say that… associates, acquaintances at the university… where I can go, and I have been going and even at department [x], that if only I needed, still long after I quit [.] I could have, let's say, asked that they re-examine someone – these sort of things.

Franek treats his professional contacts as possible venues for the gaining of favours. It is through sociable interactions deprived of deeper affectivity that he gains and reciprocates certain profits. Among other things, his son graduated from a department in which Franek had his most devoted informants. Since, in

an informal conversational set-up, an informant would not have been able to clearly determine whether what Franek did for him was official or not, a feeling of obligation might persist on the side of the informants. They would not have been able to tell whether, when Franek brought presents, which he himself had chosen, he did so simply because he wanted to and liked to, or because this was his professional method. Typically, he often gave the impression that he did some things out of the goodness of his heart, and that he somehow believed in it. He was amicable, he was helpful, and he was flirtatious – perhaps a cup of coffee with a cognac, or stockings from a Pewex shop in his briefcase.

> Me: So, what did your interactions with the academic circles look like?
>
> Franek: I was having conversations of a type – as it is being currently talked about, this is how it was. Firstly, there were so-called official contacts, where basically, if I asked, no one could have refused, or it never happened […]. The other things were typical operational contacts, where it was possible to talk with various people, apart from the official hierarchy […] basically to chat, in a form of a lovely cup of coffee or something. […] you only needed to know, well… whether someone wants, whether a person is not afraid of this contact… whether someone voluntarily agrees and amicably agrees, because you know… this was like this, you had to work out yourself some sort of friendships […]. You need to know who is who. […] and this is a question of intuition. And apart from that, you also need to take under consideration that I knew something about the people I talked to and relying on that I was building a whole strategy […]. I had many interlocutors – let's call it this way, or if you prefer – people who cooperated, who of their own free will, by themselves, through established contacts 'I have to [talk] with you, because I have an important [issue] this!'.
>
> Me: And why did they do it – out of their own belief or because they could have gained something?
>
> Franek: […] a part of them did it out of conviction that they did a good thing, a part of them did it because, let's say 'I like Franek [said as a diminutive] so I will please him, he will be delighted with this information'. A part of them was counting on benefits, meaning – I will do something for Franek [said in the diminutive] and he will do something for me'. And a fraction knew that if they said something good, well, then they would get cash.

Such constructed relations can persist only if one remains a valuable contact. Not all of the former security officers are desirable members of people's networks at present. Some of them saw their prestige collapse along with the Berlin Wall, or gradually disappear. Mirek is an example of such a person, who dropped out of the networks. Franek, on the other hand, stays in, successfully networked. This may be the main reason for his disorientation – he feels ashamed before his former professional contacts for believing in something that currently seems so obviously naive. Again, unlike Mirek, Franek cares about

what people think of him. He likes to look good, and drives a good car[130]. Now, he runs his own company; hence, he has more real capital in his hands in comparison to Mirek. Franek looks down on his failed colleagues.

> I am talking about a category [of colleagues] who retired and did not take up any action, did not do anything, and they only live with this pension [contemptuously] and they are getting old very fast. While those who remain active, or they own a firm, or they do something – these people look so much better […]. Besides, the level of conversation with those people who are active is completely different. They are normal, you can speak to them about recent stuff, about this and that, also about private, about accomplishments [.] about vodka, entertainment; meanwhile the other group is embittered, dull eh…

Transformation

In the early nineties, the secret political police went through a so-called 'verification' process. Those who were verified negatively recall it with disdain. Franek called verification a 'very ugly formula', 'a verification without verification'. Like most of the officers who were negatively verified, Franek wrote an appeal. He concluded the appeal in the following manner: 'my appeal is not caused by my desire to stay [.], because this is out of the question, I simply do not want this sort of stuff'. The actual appeal ended with the following words: 'as stated above, I ask for a thorough and objective reconsideration of my appeal'. This appeal was rejected in the same schematic manner, also by post, but this time without any possibility of further appeal. Like other former security officers who were negatively verified, in his narrative concerning verification Franek brought in the topic of 'one brutal colleague', who behaved like a Stalinist but was nonetheless allowed to remain in the firm. He felt this demonstrated that the verification process is arbitrary, unjust and offensive.

A common perception of transformation among the middle-ranking officers is that they were victimized by the top-ranked Party leadership, who used them and have now abandoned them.

130 People who constitute desirable chains in social networks are more self-confident and keep a balanced relationship with their professional past. They do not feel much fear for the projects of accounting for the communist past and marginalizing the functionaries of the communist state in terms of privileges and prestige. In fact, they do not have many personal enemies. Meanwhile, the sort of networks they had built throughout their careers in the secret services, had they been used properly at the beginning of the transformation, could have served as a good starting point for a career in the new Poland. Franek is a successful type. He despises those who failed.

> Yet, no sign on Earth indicated that, and please underline it, that our authorities, both departmental and political […] would sell us. […] the leadership shall be blamed for that, the leadership of the department and of the party, that while giving away everything, and it was the right thing to do, they skipped that topic. Because there was no place for any sort of bargain in here. Nobody was wise enough to say that this sort of claim will be laid, that this sort of lustration will take place, this and that.

It is not simply that they – the *eminences grises* of the communist state – were betrayed by their own comrades for whom they loyally worked. Their moral code was also abused, as their words of honour are being violated. Whenever they asked a person to cooperate, they gave assurances that this was between them and the person concerned, and that no trace would be left, no possibility of identification. Now there is an institution that uncovers such traces and breathes life into them. Such a condition is embarrassing, if not humiliating, for an officer, a former professional.

> Franek: Now we can have a break and talk about love. I very much like you. What else baby, what else?

Conclusion

> The world is rich enough to support an indefinite number of correct descriptions.
>
> Urlic Neisser *Nested Structure in Autobiographical Memory*.

This work should be read as a personal attempt at conveying an ethnographic description of a dynamic process of meaning given to the communist past in one Polish town through a collective endeavour pursued within a framework of a democratic nation state. It is ethnography of a particular moment in Polish history, when one party's victory made possible the articulation of a strong moral stand against the communist regime. This agenda, which implied the defining of who the Polish nation is and has been, made certain groups of people cluster around this short-lived manifestation of a centre of power and its project. The consolidation of claims to truth about the past, which emerged in the form of memory politics and settling the accounts with the past, made a collective enactment of a moral framework achievable. On a very general level, this work is about ways in which the individual is intertwined with the social, and how collective endeavours focused on defining the past, channelled through the state institutions, may influence individual processes of remembering, forgetting and articulating the self. My ambition in this work was to study the intersections of collective and individual efforts to objectify the past in the present. I aimed at grasping a larger picture of the practices of memory construction, as they emerge on different levels of social life, kaleidoscopic and multidimensional in their nature. I chose to work with two groups of people, differently positioned vis-à-vis the memory project, because I was interested in ways in which the divergent positions and resources available for defining themselves have influenced the idiosyncratic ways in which they try to maintain a sense of self-coherence in time. Throughout these chapters, I have tried to describe ways in which the memory framework drew lines of inclusion and exclusion, generating a sense of belonging in the heroes/victims, and a sense of disorientation among the former security officers.

This manuscript is as much about the phenomenological experience of communism that my informants lived through as it is about the historically emergent, state-sponsored channels through which the meaning of the communist past was solidified. The processes of objectification of the past are understood as collectively realized enactments in which various groups participate with different motivations in mind. The society I studied is characterized by deep ideological divisions. These divisions translate into the sphere of memory

politics. In reference to the communist past, the heroes/victims and the former security officers have different claims to the truth and, during my fieldwork, they also differed in terms of the channels and resources available for realizing these claims. Wanting to belong to a continuous national community for which they fought, the heroes/victims saw communism as an aberration, a form of colonialism. During communism, they were deprived of a sense of belonging to the emergent political form; hence, in order to feel at home in today's Poland, they needed to exclude that period as exceptional, representing it as an error. The former security officers, on the other hand, wish to continue to belong as, throughout their working lives, they did, after all, serve the national interest. They vowed to the nation, and they learned to explain everything they did in terms of the Polish interest. They find it absurd when they are accused of a 'communist crime'. They understand communism as one of many legitimate state forms, smoothly transformed into a democratic one, among others, through their own efforts; and, if there were transgressions taking place, the high-ranking communist party members should be brought to account for those transgressions in the first instance - they believe.

Testing the value of the memory project

In a sense, in this research I wanted to see how successful the memory project implemented during my fieldwork has been for the heroes/victims and the former security officers in terms of bringing a sense of closure and justice in the aftermath of the communist past[131]. My main observation concerned the fragility of this project, and a sense of uncertainty about this solution felt by both categories of informants. For the heroes/victims, it involved a feeling of fear entangled with experiencing competing forms of remembering, which did not allow the

131 I would find it interesting to make a comparison of the Polish case with an opposing model of memory politics. One example that contrasts with the solutions adapted in Poland and other countries of the East-Central Europe - a so-called 'reconciliatory approach' that avoids 'victor's justice' by creating an inclusive space for both sides of the conflict - is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission established in 1995 in South Africa after the abolition of apartheid. This single institution linked witnessing, amnesty and reparation. The victims were empowered by the creation of a testimonial stage for them, and they were assisted in the rehabilitation process. The concept of witnessing was explicitly envisaged here as catharsis or cleansing and was set up publicly. The Commission offered amnesty to perpetrators who made full, often public, disclosure of committed acts. Individual people could apply to the Commission for amnesty for the crimes committed during apartheid if they were politically motivated and fully disclosed (Ross 2001:250-253).

comfort of experiencing or perceiving one's claims to the truth as common. Only with the help of the Church and the state institutions were the heroes/victims able to craft a comfort zone, in which they practised their hero/victim selves as transcendental, possibly allowing for the construction of a coherent and valuable self-image. In particular, it was the Law and Justice Party's government in which they trusted. They felt that, finally, these politicians understood what Poland was. Yet, even in the Association, an unknown culprit's act of painting a gibbet with a swastika hanging on it on the Association's door caused all the members I had met to feel anxious. They felt as though they had been attacked and had lost ground. Was their struggle not yet over? And was the current state willing to protect them at all? More importantly, at the end of such encounters there are always hidden internal doubts about the sense and correctness of one's choices, which cannot be questioned if one is to serve as a fully-fledged hero/victim, a symbolic resource of the nation. I found that the heroes/victims' task was particularly difficult to accomplish: being used as a national resource in conditions in which the communist past is still being contested in the public space and trying to relate the sense of self to the collectively achieved framework in an absolute fashion while being frequently reminded in the course of social interactions that this image and their truth were only partial filled these people with a constant fear of denial.

The former security officers, on the other hand, felt that the fragility of their condition, during the Law and Justice Party's term, was defined by the arbitrariness of the memory project and the fact that they had become a symbolic scapegoat in the process of judging the communist past. They thought that the judgement was being performed by the victorious victims and not by society. In their eyes, the project did not have a proper collective dimension, nor was it constructed in a manner that would trace and punish individual transgressions independently of the political system. Obviously, they knew about the ins and outs of the various violent faces of the communist regime, on the maintenance of which they had often worked very meticulously. However, the Law and Justice Party's memory project did not create the conditions for communicating their truth and incorporating their lives into a larger picture of societal transformation. The collectively achieved framework concerning the communist past ascribed to them the role of perpetrators, which was difficult for them to identify with, especially since it implied the possibility of being charged for the past transgressions that they had sometimes been ordered to carry out. The process of judging that took place was understood by them as unpredictable and arbitrary. Hence, the safest strategy for them to adopt was that of distantiation from guilt and responsibility, which often implied distancing from the past phenomenological truth and transforming this truth through the process of elaboration of new constructs, attuned to the new re-

ality and allowing the maintenance of a positive self-image. The anxiety was omnipresent among these people. The clearest evidence of this was the difficulty in finding those willing to talk. Eventually, once I sat down face to face with some of them, I felt their internal pressure for presenting the past selectively and their desire to create a coherent account in which the self would be located at a safe distance from any possibility of transgression and wrongness. The more remote they were from their past lives, living in a world that condemned them and created no platform for the evocation of the past truthful to their phenomenological experience, the more intelligible this past became for them, and the more difficult it was to convey it. After each encounter with a security officer, I realized how difficult it would have been for me to see through them and how tiny were the pieces of themselves given away in narrative form.

Dream of belonging

During this fieldwork, I approached the middle-ranking security officers with no feelings of disgust or prejudice. I was simply curious to learn who they were and how they ended up doing all those things for which they are detested. In this research, I tried to get closer to their underworld. I am conscious, though, that the world of their memories could be explored even deeper. The level of intelligibility of some of their stories, and the fragmented nature of their narratives, as well as a sense of eeriness of what they recalled in front of me give me reason to believe that there is much more to discover than a language of distantiation, which I was able to grasp and convey. Their stories require much more time to unravel than those whose identity is based on the fact of the existence of that strange underworld that was aimed against them. The act of unravelling what constitutes these people requires an acceptance and openness to strangeness and the possibility of being many different things at the same time. The former security officers amaze with their plasticity; they lie both to their interlocutors and to themselves. In their narratives, they form their selves as overtly masculine and, at the same time, as good and helpful, aggrandizing their work and their way of being while, in fact, most of their stories, when listened to carefully, are riddled with awkwardness and clumsiness, so remote from what they believed these stories to have been. And yet, I felt they needed me – someone to whom they could lie and display that coherent version that allowed them to exist, but also to admit, just slightly, the evil aspects of their work. I was sometimes suffocating in their rooms full of stories, knowing that they were using my silence as a sign of approval. My meetings with them built up hope that the memory project would not be the only mode of approaching them and their past. As I sat silently in strange

places with a voice recorder - sometimes curious, sometimes speechless, asking them questions, but never really provoking a discussion or making them feel uncomfortable - I was unable to act any differently. I felt disgusted by what had happened to these people, and I felt sorry for their ordinariness that so strongly reminded me that evil is banal and a part of our social world - difficult to explain and make transparent in the eyes of those who commit it. And yet, I was unable to judge them.

For the heroes/victims, my research was another experience of recognition and confirmation, particularly prestigious, since this project was realized in England. The work with this group of people was easier because of their sense of obligation to convey and transfer the knowledge of their devastating experience to subsequent generations. They were accessible and open. Yet, working with them was simultaneously difficult, since the modes in which they were ready to convey this knowledge were already objectified, canonized and collectively coordinated. I hence faced the task of pinning down the already canonized ways of narrating and representing one's past and searching for those memories that have so far escaped the uniformity of collective forms and myths. The fieldwork among the heroes/victims was particularly difficult for me in emotional terms, as these people, despite their centrality to the Law and Justice Party's memory politics, did not perceive any genuine gratitude from the next generations for what they had fought for, and they felt very lonely in their efforts to give testimony and teach patriotism. Apart from the state-organized events, in which children recite poems, proudly stand with flags and give the heroes/victims flowers, they often received no other experience of recognition. In particular, they rarely received recognition from within their own families[132] – from their children and grandchildren. In fact, the recognition they experienced was quite narrowly defined, as it emerged only through institutional channels and happened on special occasions. Hence, every encounter with a member of the younger generations, in whom the heroes/victims discern a genuine interest, generates a kind of need for an emotional bond between them, and the hopes that the message they give and the values they believe in will be carried on by this person and conveyed to others. They also hope that, eventually, the interest in their past taken by such a person will simultaneously mean a readiness to support them in their associational struggle for visibility and involvement in the

132 Initially, I planned to carry out this research mainly in the kinship context. However, once I entered the Association, I realized that the heroes/victims guard the access to their families. Similarly, the ex-communist functionaries never reacted to my suggestions of a possible meeting with their spouses or children. In their eyes, it seemed irrelevant for my work.

memory project. I, who perceived my informants as victims not only of communism, but also of nationalism, found myself in a particularly difficult position while in the field, situated vis-à-vis my informants, because I was not able to reciprocate the gift of their story and their trust. I feel a strong sense of objection to nationalism and forms of national remembering because of their exclusive nature and ways in which they evoke a sense of superiority in people. I strongly object to militarization and do not look up to lives lost in the name of a national community. Hence, despite feeling empathy and sadness for the miserable and humiliating experiences of the heroes/victims, I was not able to align myself with their enthusiasm for the memory project and their involvement in the national and patriotic education. I was more attentive to the hazards of their beliefs, and the ultimate emptiness of the recognition and thanksgiving they receive from the nation state for their efforts in guarding the national values. On numerous occasions during the fieldwork, the heroes/victims asked me to become an honorary member of their Association. Each time, I was embarrassed by such proposals and rejected them. I never stated openly that I did not identify with their values and ideals. I simply tried to pay as much respect to their lives as possible while listening, observing, and asking questions. I know that manifesting my beliefs could have closed my path to them. On the other hand, however, they did not seem to want to know about my beliefs either, as my very presence meant so much to them.

The relationship with the informants was the most difficult part of this research. This was because all of them were so much in need of recognition, acceptance, and a sense of closeness, which I was not ready to give in any form other than by researching. In this sense, I did not meet their expectations. Ultimately, this research evoked in me questions about the sort of community this society has become - probably more fragmented now than thirty years ago.

Being conscious that what I saw with my eyes was very far from what my informants were able to admit with their words made the writing of this ethnography a harsh process. I opened this chapter quoting Neisser, who wrote that '*The world is rich enough to support an indefinite number of correct descriptions'*. I hence insist that the reader treats this description as one of many possible - a very personal, hopefully correct in some ways, account of my encounter with two groups of people seized and almost paralyzed by their past. The bond I felt with them during this research and now when I recall them was that of humanity as, in the first place, they appeared in my eyes as human beings; and the lesson I carried with me beyond this work was the fact that we are the same in terms of the structures of our desires, needs, weaknesses, and inclinations - except that we became differently conditioned and variously tied by events, encounters, and meanings in the production of which we were involved.

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